

Humanitarian Response & Development Foundation (HRDF) Safeguarding Policy

Protecting People. Protecting Trust.

1. Introduction

Humanitarian and development work begins with trust. Communities welcome us into their lives with the expectation that we will respect and protect them. At HRDF, safeguarding is not only a donor requirement. It is part of our faith, our culture, and our moral responsibility.

This policy explains how HRDF prevents and responds to any form of harm, abuse, or exploitation involving children, women, men, or vulnerable individuals. It applies everywhere HRDF works, whether in schools, villages, offices, or online.

Our aim is simple:

Every person interacting with HRDF should feel safe and respected at all times.

2. Why Safeguarding Matters

Pakistan is rich in culture, community values, and respect for dignity. Yet we also recognize that social barriers, poverty, crises, and power dynamics sometimes expose people to harm. This is especially true for:

- Children
- Women and girls
- Persons with disabilities
- People facing poverty or displacement
- Groups with limited social protection
- Anyone depending on aid or services

Safeguarding is our obligation to ensure that **no one is harmed by the work we do, the people we hire, or the systems we create.**

3. Policy Scope

This policy applies to:

- Full-time and part-time HRDF staff
- Volunteers, consultants, and interns
- Senior leadership and board members
- Partner staff, vendors, and contractors
- Community mobilizers and field teams
- Any individual representing HRDF in any capacity

4. HRDF's Core Safeguarding Principles

Our commitments are guided by:

1. Dignity and Respect

We treat every person with compassion, professionalism, and fairness.

2. Zero Harm

We do not tolerate any form of abuse, exploitation, harassment, neglect, bullying, or harmful behavior.

3. Cultural Sensitivity

We act in ways that respect Pakistani values, family systems, faith, traditions, and community norms while protecting rights.

4. Survivor-Centered Response

When harm occurs, we support survivors respectfully, confidentially, and without judgment.

5. Accountability

Everyone in HRDF shares responsibility. No one is above the policy.

6. Transparency with Donors and Communities

We engage openly, report appropriately, and comply with international standards.

5. Definitions of Abuse

Safeguarding includes protection from:

- **Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH)**
- **Physical abuse or violence**
- **Emotional or psychological abuse**
- **Neglect or abandonment**
- **Child abuse, early or forced marriage, trafficking**
- **Threats, intimidation, humiliation, bullying**
- **Abuse of power or privilege**
- **Online exploitation or inappropriate communication**

6. Child Protection

A child is anyone under 18. HRDF has **zero tolerance** for:

- Sexual activity with children
- Child labor within organizational roles
- Using children in harmful or humiliating images or messaging
- Being alone with a child in a private, unobservable space
- Physical punishment, threats, or verbal abuse

We respect local customs and family roles, but **no tradition justifies harming a child.**

7. Safeguarding Responsibilities

All HRDF Staff and Partners Must:

- Read and follow this policy
- Treat every person with dignity
- Report any safeguarding concern immediately
- Ensure safe interaction with communities
- Maintain confidentiality when handling sensitive information
- Never abuse their power, position, or relationships

8. Risk Prevention Measures

HRDF ensures safety through:

Safe Recruitment

- Reference checks, identity verification, and screening
- Position-specific vetting (especially for child-facing roles)
- Signing the Code of Conduct before deployment

Training

- Mandatory safeguarding and SEAH induction for all staff
- Refreshers each year
- Community awareness sessions for teachers, mobilizers, and volunteers

Safe Program Design

- Gender-sensitive spaces
- Community feedback systems
- Avoiding isolated or unsafe project locations
- Appropriate staff-community boundaries
- Planning for cultural dynamics, including segregation where needed

9. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

All concerns can be reported through:

- Safeguarding focal person
- HR or senior management
- Confidential email (e.g. safeguarding@hrdf.org.pk)
- Complaint boxes on project sites
- Verbal reporting through neutral staff
- Anonymous reporting

No one who reports in good faith will face retaliation.

10. Response and Case Management

When a concern is reported, HRDF will:

1. Ensure immediate safety
2. Protect confidentiality and dignity
3. Inform leadership and donors where required
4. Investigate fairly and independently
5. Take disciplinary or legal action
6. Support the survivor with appropriate referral services

11. Confidentiality

We do not expose survivors. Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis. Files are securely stored. Identities are protected.

12. Working with Partners

Any organization working with HRDF must:

- Agree to this policy
- Train their staff accordingly
- Report incidents immediately
- Allow investigations when needed

Partnerships may be paused or terminated if safeguarding responsibilities are not met.

13. Risk in Digital and Communication Spaces

Staff may not:

- Share identifiable photos of children without proper consent
- Ask beneficiaries for private contact outside work channels
- Send inappropriate messages or content
- Post harmful or discriminatory content online while representing HRDF

14. Breaches and Consequences

Breaking this policy may result in:

- Termination of contract
- Reporting to police or authorities
- Permanent removal from HRDF programs
- Informing relevant donors, networks, and institutions

15. Policy Review

HRDF will review this policy every 12 months or sooner if required by law, donors, or organizational changes. Learning and feedback from communities will inform updates.

16. Final Commitment

Safeguarding is more than paperwork for us. It is part of our faith, culture, and identity as Pakistanis and humanitarians. It reflects what we believe:

That dignity is a right. Respect is non-negotiable. Safety is essential.

We owe this to every child, every woman, every man, every colleague, and every community who places their trust in HRDF.

If we cannot protect people, we cannot serve them.