

Sustainable Social Development Organization

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

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1. Introduction and Purpose

Social Sustainable Development Organization (SSDO) is a research based non-governmental advocacy organization founded and incorporated in 2015 registered under Societies Registration Act 1860. SSDO is working to contribute to the well-being of society for establishing an institutionalized system of social development through emphasizing a responsible citizenship. It is a civil initiative aimed to stimulate public dialogue on policies, inform public action, and activate social regrouping. SSDO was formed with the vision of contributing towards the sustainable and inclusive development of underprivileged communities of marginalized areas of Pakistan.

SSDO plans to play its part in eradicating the issues causing hindrance in development of different segments and groups of the society. SSDO has been working with men, women, children, minorities and other marginalized individuals of the society. The work has been done around different areas of Pakistan covering four provinces; Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. SSDO seeks out for opportunities to implement effective context-based activities setting accountable the concerned personnel and departments. SSDO is enriched with experienced staff holding expertise in different areas to cater diverse issues.

SSDO also holds national secretariat of child rights movements which is network of around 400 national organizations working on child rights across Pakistan. SSDO believes that children's need to be respected and protected. The purpose of the policy is to set minimum standards on child protection and to make sure that SSDO works for the safest possible environment for children.

2. Policy Statement

SSDO believes that children, young adults or vulnerable groups should never experience abuse or exploitation of any kind and that children, young adults/vulnerable groups:

- Have the right to be protected from harm;
- Need to be safe and to feel safe;
- Need support that matches their individual needs, including those who may have experienced abuse, torture and trauma;
- Have the right to speak freely and voice their values and beliefs;
- Have the right to be supported to meet their emotional and social needs.

All activities are executed in the best interests of the children, young adults and other vulnerable groups. All staff members and consultants have the responsibility to promote the welfare of children, young adults and vulnerable groups who they are engaging with. Anyone under the age of 18 years is considered a child and anyone between the ages of 18–32 is considered young adults, in line with UN definitions. SSDO believes in the following principles, which are reflected in all of the organization's projects. Each principle is explained in terms of its duty of care to the organization's staff and consultants:

Empowerment: Individuals are supported and encouraged to make informed decisions and give their consent as per their own understanding of their decision.

Prevention: It is better to take action before any foreseen and unforeseen harm.

Proportionality: The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

Protection: Support and representation for those in great need and for the especially vulnerable.

Partnership: Local solutions through services working with the concerned communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

Accountability: Accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

SSDO ensures that the right to protection from all forms of exploitation and abuse is implicit. Underpinned by the organizational value of accountability, it is our prime responsibility to safeguard all individuals involved in SSDO's work. SSDO will not tolerate exploitative or abusive behavior or neglect (including psychological and emotional abuse physical and sexual abuse etc.) by anyone associated with the implementation of its work and highlights this as a core commitment in the organization's Accountability Framework. SSDO recognizes that individuals, women, men, girls and boys in certain contexts may be considered more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than others, and we make every effort to eliminate such risks from our programs and projects. SSDO particularly recognizes that the need to protect individuals, women, men, girls and boys coming into contact with SSDO representatives is of paramount importance. The vulnerability of children and women to abuse is increased by many factors, including poverty, inequality, violence, cultural practices and humanitarian crises. Children and women who are exploited and abused are more likely to suffer long-term consequences, including mental health issues, reduced educational outcomes, drug and alcohol abuse and increased likelihood of breaking the law. SSDO is committed to doing what it can to safeguard those individuals, women, men, girls and boys with whom it interacts, either directly or indirectly, so that they can avail their right to live and grow up in protective environment. Individuals who are vulnerable by virtue of their gender are also safeguarded by ensuring that they are not discriminated through language and behavior on the basis of their gender identity.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff, interns, visitors/donors, consultants/resource persons, contractors, suppliers and any other individuals working for or representing SSDO. They are obligated to comply with the terms of this policy as mentioned in their contractual agreement and shall ensure that their employees and sub-contractors do likewise throughout the duration of their contract of work/employment with SSDO.

4. Commitment to Safeguarding Principles

SSDO is committed to the safety and well-being of all community members coming into contact with SSDO's employees. Our organization takes its duty of care seriously and will aim, at all times, to provide the safest possible environment. This will be achieved by identifying and managing risks that may lead to harm and dealing immediately with concerns and reports if they arise.

All staff, interns, visitors/donors, consultants / resource persons, contractors, suppliers and any other individuals working for or representing SSDO shall ensure that they follow the organizational Code of Conduct on Safeguarding (Annex.2) as well as report on any protection related concern or staff's conduct towards the children, young adults and vulnerable groups.

All SSDO's employees shall work in a way which does no harm to the population we are working with.

- SSDO shall ensure support for survivors and whistle-blowers; enhance accountability and transparency; strengthen reporting; and tackle impunity.
- Incentivize cultural change through strong leadership, organizational accountability and better human resource processes and human development.
- Adopt global standards and ensure they are met or exceeded.
- Strengthen organizational capacity and capability.

SSDO will make efforts to enhance and strengthen coping mechanisms and resilience of communities by highlighting protection concerns using community-based complaint mechanisms.

5. Role & Responsibility in SSDO

5.1 *The Role and Responsibilities of SSDO in Safeguarding*

SSDO staff, by the nature of their work, interacts and understands sensitive information regarding children, young adults and vulnerable groups. This information may be called as evidence in protection related investigations or to inform decision-making. SSDO staff may become aware of violations of rights or allegations of violations, or, stories of violations. Sometimes circumstances and intuition will leave the worker suspecting a violation of rights.

- Concerns must be reported immediately to the staff line manager who in response will report to the Safeguarding Committee member of SSDO.
- Whenever a staff member of SSDO hears of abuse or exploitation, detailed notes of circumstances and dialogue must be included in records and kept confidential. These records may be used as evidence in the case management process.
- Deal with a disclosure of abuse from children, young adults and vulnerable groups in line with the guidance in Annex 2 - you must inform the Safeguarding Committee member of SSDO immediately, and provide a written account as soon as possible.
- Any knowledge regarding staff prior record of community specifically children, young adults and vulnerable groups-based activities which are questionable should be raised with the line manager and Safeguarding Committee member.
- Cases of serious nature in which victims require rehabilitation, legal assistance, psycho-social support or medical treatment will be referred to statutory Safeguarding agencies or equivalent authorities. However, victim consent will be necessary to follow this procedure.

5.2 *The Role of Line Managers in Safeguarding*

- To record and report protection concern to the Safeguarding Committee member.
- Ensure that the staff is aware of, and have access to Safeguarding Policy and related documents.
- Ensure that the staff is aware of procedures for reporting concerns and their responsibilities in reporting.
- Ensure that the community members we work with directly are aware of the main aspects of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures for reporting concerns and complaints.
- Ensure parental or guardian consent is sought for any activity with a child and encourage parental participation in all activities involving children.
- Ensure parental or guardian consent is sought before taking any images or footage of children. Ensure that the parent or guardian understands the purpose of this activity and how the images or footage will be used.
- Plan and organize the work and the workplace so as to eliminate risks to children, young adults and vulnerable groups.
- Be aware of situations that may present risks and ensure these are supervised appropriately.
- Ensure that the staff is accountable during SSDO's project and organizational activities.
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists amongst staff to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.

- Ensure that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior by SSDO staff does not go unchallenged.

5.3 The Role of Human Resource Department in implementing Safeguarding Policy

- Ensure this Safeguarding policy and procedure as well as code of conduct is included in the job contracts/agreements to all new employees and all SSDO's stakeholders.
- Ensure that during the recruitment and selection of all types of human resources, the staff recruitment practices are followed as mentioned below.
- Ensure that all staff is adequately trained on the policy and protocols.

6. Recruitment Practices

SSDO is committed to prohibit recruiting anyone under the age of 18 years. SSDO will always try to recruit the most suitable person for any role, ensuring that they respect and value children, young adults, and vulnerable groups and committed to good practice in working with them. Our practices aim to recruit the most suitable candidate to work for our programs.

6.1 Recruitment Procedures in Relation to Staff

In relation to the recruitment of staff, the individual line manager recruiting and selecting representatives, SSDO must ensure that these procedures are followed. They must read this section carefully as certain procedures (e.g., interview, reference checks, and security clearance) will be relevant for these roles.

6.2 Development of Relevant Job Descriptions

All positions for SSDO have a specific job description. For positions that are directly interacting with community members; the line manager must ensure that they carefully consider the role and the required level of qualification and experience needed to uphold good practice in working with children, young adults and vulnerable groups in the community. The line manager must ensure that the candidates are selected against the set criteria.

6.3 Interview and Selection

Screening measures must take into selection processes for all staff, consultants and interns. These include various reference checks as per recruitment procedures. Specific interview questions should be asked to explore knowledge, experience and approaches of working with children, young adults and vulnerable groups which is relevant to the role. The test and interview should be based on competency so that the capacity of the staff as per the job description of the required role can be accurately measured and assessed. One question should be relevant to safeguarding to know the knowledge of the candidate on the subject.

7 Use of Children, Young Adults and Vulnerable Groups' Images

SSDO will, at all times portray affected/vulnerable population (children, young adults and vulnerable groups) that they are working with in a respectful and appropriate manner. Guidelines on the use of images of the project participants are included in Annex: 2 Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

8 Implication of Non-Compliance

SSDO has zero tolerance for any form of abuse and exploitation. SSDO reserves the right to refuse employment offer to staff, interns if they are deemed to pose a risk to any segment of the population that the organization is engaged with.

Similarly, if any consultants / resource persons, Visitor, contractors, suppliers and any other individuals working for or representing SSDO are found to be engaged, or suspected of being engaged in any activity that can harm or put on risk of abuse or exploitation will be reported to the relevant authorities or their employer SSDO will take disciplinary action against them such that their names will be blacklisted by SSDO.

9 Safeguarding Risk Management

Under this policy, SSDO will ensure that a Safeguarding risk assessment is part of the Quality Insurance and compliance is ensured through monitoring of the project at field level.

SSDO ensures child development and protection through working with stakeholders involved in any activity especially in SSDO's Projects. SSDO ensures that the voices of children, young adults and vulnerable groups are heard and are incorporated in the projects that are directly related to their interest.

10 Safeguarding Concerns Reporting Processes

Any known or suspected protection concerns must be brought to the attention of Line Manager and/or directly to the Safeguarding Committee member. If a staff reports a concern to their Line Manager, the Line Manager is expected to immediately notify a Safeguarding Committee member. In the event that staff members have concerns related to the behavior of their Line Manager, they should raise these concerns directly with a Safeguarding Committee member.

11 Communication Guidelines for Interacting with Community Members Specifically with Women, Children, Young Adults and Vulnerable Groups

SSDO will ensure the following;

- Acquire permission of child/ guardian or adult to use images for publicity / fundraising / awareness (informed consent) as much as possible.
- Let women, children, young adults and vulnerable groups (such as persons with disability and elderly people) give their own accounts as much as possible rather than others speaking on their behalf; highlight ability of women, children, young adults and vulnerable groups to take responsibility and action for themselves by providing and ensuring a protective environment for them.
- An accurate and balanced portrayal of women, children, young adults and vulnerable groups, with emphasis on dignity and as much reference as possible to their social, cultural and economic environment.
- Accurate representation of women, children, young adults and vulnerable groups; and avoid manipulation or sensationalizing text and images while laying emphasis on dignity.

- Avoid: degrading, victimizing or shaming language and images; making inaccurate generalizations; discrimination of any kind; taking pictures out of context.
- Women, children, young adults and vulnerable groups must be appropriately clothed in images and not in sexually provocative poses.
- No personal and physical information to identify location of women, children, young adults and vulnerable groups that could put them at risk to be put on website or on any other communication mediums including brochures, pamphlets and/or social media pages.
- Always seek permission before taking photos of women, children, young adults and vulnerable groups except in exceptional circumstances.

12. Accountability

SSDO's safeguarding responsibilities fall on each and every member of the organization. All staff is responsible for ensuring that the activities that they are involved in during the course of their work are carried out in accordance with this policy.

Managers are committed to ensure that this policy is fully communicated and followed by their team members. It is their responsibility to ensure that the activities and services they provide have adequate procedures to protect and safeguard the children, young adults and vulnerable groups.

13. Guidance and Reference

The policy should also be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Annex 1: Definitions
- Annex 2: Safeguarding Code of conduct

Annex 1: Definitions and Indicators of Abuse

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on Exploitation and The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and UNCRPD covers the issue of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

There are four main categories of abuse and neglect: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Each has its own specific warning indicators, which we should be alert to.

1. **Physical abuse:** A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a children, young adults and vulnerable groups. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or care taker fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in children, young adults and vulnerable groups.

2. **Emotional abuse:** The persistent emotional maltreatment of children, young adults and vulnerable groups such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the children, young adults and vulnerable group's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children, young adults and vulnerable groups that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the children, young adults and vulnerable groups opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, young adults and vulnerable groups. These may include interactions that are beyond children, young adults and vulnerable groups developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the children, young adults and vulnerable groups participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children, young adults and vulnerable groups frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children, young adults and vulnerable groups. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of children, young adults and vulnerable groups, though it may occur alone.

3. **Sexual abuse:** Involves forcing or enticing children, young adults and vulnerable groups to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the children, young adults and vulnerable groups are aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children, young adults and vulnerable groups in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children, young adults and vulnerable groups to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming children, young adults and vulnerable groups in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children and vulnerable adult.

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children, young adults and vulnerable groups are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, children, young adults and vulnerable groups or women are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Children, young adults and vulnerable groups sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children and vulnerable adults, women or girls who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point. Indicators of sexual exploitation include children, young adults and vulnerable groups who:

- Appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions.
- Associate with other young people involved in exploitation.
- Have older boyfriends or girlfriends.
- Have sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant.
- Misuse drugs and alcohol.
- Go missing for periods of time/ regularly come home late/ absent from school without explanation.

3. Neglect: The persistent failure to meet children, young adults and vulnerable groups' basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child or vulnerable adult's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child and vulnerable adults is born, neglect may involve a parent or care taker failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect children, young adults and vulnerable groups from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child, young adults and vulnerable group's basic emotional needs.

UNCRC Article 19 covers the issue of neglect.

Radicalization: The process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate on terrorist activity.

Extremism is the demonstration of unacceptable behavior by using any means or medium to express views which:

- Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs
- Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts
- Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or
- Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence.

Annex 2: Safeguarding Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behavior towards individuals including children, young adults and vulnerable groups. The Code ensures that all staff, interns, visitors, consultants/ resource persons, contractors, suppliers and any other individuals working for or representing SSDO, understand clearly what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior towards individuals we are working with, in order to protect against false allegations by others. It also serves to protect individuals we are working with and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. All staff, interns, visitors, consultants / resource persons, contractors, suppliers and any other individuals working for or representing SSDO are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct which states.

I Will:

- Treat all children, young adults and vulnerable groups with respect, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Listen to children, young adults and vulnerable groups we are working with and respect their ideas and opinion.
- Welcome the individuals we are working with in different programs and encourage their participation in activities.
- Listen to children, young adults and vulnerable groups and take action to protect their well-being.
- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage them effectively.
- Be visible when working with children, young adults and vulnerable groups, as far as possible. Whenever possible, I will ensure that another adult is present when I am working in the proximity of children.
- Talk to children, young adults and vulnerable groups about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that bad practices or potentially abusive behavior does not go unchallenged.
- Keep confidential all information that I am party to regarding Safeguarding cases, disclosing such information only to those individuals as outlined in our organization's Safeguarding Reporting Mechanism.
- Report any violation of these standards of behavior, in accordance with the organization's Safeguarding policy and mechanism.

I Will Not:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse any individual including children, young adults and vulnerable groups. I will refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children, young adults and vulnerable groups.
- Belittle, insult, shout at, or otherwise verbally or emotionally abuse any individual we are working with.
- Behave physically or say anything to an individual in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- Do things of a personal nature that an individual can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes of children. If a person's disability means he/she needs my assistance, I will inform a colleague in advance and ensure that I am as transparent as possible in my behavior.
- Hire children as domestic labour or for other work which is inappropriate to their age or development stage, which interferes with time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.

- Discriminate on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Develop “personal” relationships with specific individuals for my own needs.
- Develop physical / sexual relationships with children, young adults and vulnerable groups we are working with.
- Give gifts or show favoritism.
- Have purely personal contact with individuals from the organization’s programs outside of work.
- Invite unaccompanied children or women into my home.
- Sleep close to unsupervised children, young adults and vulnerable groups.
- Be alone with a child in a room with the door closed. If absolutely necessary e.g. providing counseling, then I must notify my superior first.
- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others (this includes drivers of vehicles belonging to the organization).

Use of Children, young adults and vulnerable groups’ Images:

SSDO will at all times portray children, young adults and vulnerable groups in a respectful and appropriate manner. As staff, interns, visitors, consultants/resource persons, contractors, suppliers of SSDO, I agree to the following image guidelines:

- Children, young adults and vulnerable groups shall always be portrayed in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive. Amount of clothing will vary from culture to culture, but generally babies and children must be wearing pants or similar at a minimum. Girls beyond toddler should be wearing a top.
- Children, young adults and vulnerable groups must always be asked for consent when using their images. When asking for consent to use the image, details should be given as to how and where this image will be used.
- Children, young adults and vulnerable groups shall be portrayed as part of their community.
- Local culture traditions shall be assessed regarding restrictions for reproducing personal images.
- Images shall be an honest representation of the context and the facts.
- There shall be no identification information of the children, young adults and vulnerable groups used in the publication of images with their location. All recorded identifying details are to be stored confidentially.
- When sending images electronically, file labels shall not reveal identifying information.

This is not a complete list. The basic understanding is that staff shall avoid actions or behavior which may constitute bad practices or potentially abusive behavior, and shall use their own common sense in considering what may be acceptable and unacceptable behavior towards children.