

# **CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

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## **Development Wheel (DEW)**

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#### **1. Introduction**

Development Wheel (DEW) is committed to recognize the personal dignity and rights of all people we work especially vulnerable groups regardless of gender, race, culture and disability. DEW has a particular concern to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults are safeguarded. DEW recognizes the power dynamics inherent in working with children and vulnerable adults and the potential for abuse and exploitation by staff of people we are in contact with. Therefore, the policy sets out the DEW's approach to prevent and reduce harm to children and vulnerable adults when they are in contact with DEW staff, consultants, visitors, volunteers and partners.

#### **2. Objectives**

The specific objectives of this policy are to ensure that:

- Vulnerable individuals who use our services or premises are not abused and that DEW's working practices minimize the risk of such abuse.
- The welfare of a vulnerable individual is recognized as paramount and to ensure they are provided with appropriate safety and protection whilst working with/visiting DEW;
- All staff understands their legal and moral responsibility to protect vulnerable individuals from harm, abuse and exploitation
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All staff are able to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues;
- There is a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting staff, which is consistently applied; and
- DEW keeps up-to-date with legal and good practice developments relating to the welfare and protection of vulnerable individuals.

#### **3. Application and Scope**

This policy applies to

3.1 All DEW staff and associates (Staff refers to all DEW staff, volunteers, interns and governance members and associates refers to consultants, contractors and vendors).

3.2 DEW's partner organization and their associates

3.3 All members of different committees of DEW (General Body, Executive board)

#### **4. Definitions**

Please note that throughout this document the following terms apply:

- **Safeguarding** is the protection of everyone's right to be safe and protected from abuse.
- **Abuse** is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, sexual, verbal or psychological; it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act or it may occur when a

vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent; it may be an abuse of power.

- **Vulnerable individual** refers jointly to children and vulnerable adults. We also note that in the context of DEW's work, vulnerability could also arise as a result of:
  - power imbalances between beneficiaries, producer groups or partner organisations and DEW's staff.
  - fundraising and communications activity and the treatment of donors /potential donors when approaching them for their support.
- **Child or Children** refers to anyone under the age of 18, but this policy notes that this may differ in other countries.
- **Vulnerable adults** are over 18 years of age who are considered vulnerable according to the particular activities that are being undertaken at the time, regardless of how often they are undertaken. For example, a vulnerable adult could be someone who:
  - o has a physical or sensory disability

o has a learning disability

o has mental health problems

o is older

o is disadvantaged or potentially vulnerable due to their life circumstances

## **SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Code of Conduct should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense, with the best interests of the vulnerable individual as the primary consideration. Staff must familiarize themselves with the local norms around physical contact between vulnerable individuals and others.

### **Minimizing risk situations**

- **Try to:** avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position; be accompanied by a second adult whenever possible; meet with a vulnerable individual in a central, public location whenever possible; immediately note the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation; keep in mind that actions, no matter how well intended, can always be subject to misinterpretation by a third party.
- **Try not to** be alone with a single child or vulnerable individual, including in the following situations; in a car (no matter how short the journey); overnight (no matter where the accommodation); in your home or the home of a vulnerable individual. Do not show favoritism or spend excessive amounts of time with just one individual.

### **Sexual behavior**

- **Do not:** engage in sexual intercourse with vulnerable individuals; allow sexually provocative games or conversations (face to face or otherwise) with vulnerable individuals to take place; kiss, hug, fondle, rub or touch a vulnerable individual in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way; sleep in the same bed as a vulnerable individual; do things of a personal nature that an individual could do for him/herself, including bathing, dressing and grooming and do not encourage any crushes by a vulnerable individual.

### **Physical behavior**

- Do not: initiate any physical contact.
- **Try not to** engage in any physical contact, even if initiated by the vulnerable individual. If a situation necessitates, eg shaking hands in greeting, holding hands, wait for this to be initiated by the vulnerable individual.

### **Psychosocial behavior**

- **Do:** be aware of the power balance between an adult and a vulnerable individual (child or adult), and avoid taking any advantage this may provide.
- **Do not:** use language that will mentally or emotionally harm; suggest inappropriate behavior or relations of any kind; act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate, or degrade; encourage any inappropriate attention-seeking behavior, such as tantrums; show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion.

### **Peer abuse**

- **Do:** be aware of the potential for peer abuse; develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children and vulnerable adults; avoid placing children and vulnerable adults in high-risk peer situations (for example unsupervised mixing of older and younger children and vulnerable adults).
- **Do not:** allow children and vulnerable adults to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.

### **Physical environment**

- **Do:** develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (for example for projects based near water, heavy road traffic, railway lines).

## **RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS**

There is a process for reporting and reacting to witnessed, suspected or alleged abuse and/or violation of the Safeguarding Policy:

### **1. Allegations from a Vulnerable Individual**

When a vulnerable individual informs you that he/she is uncomfortable or concerned with a specific person's (adult or child) behavior towards them or another vulnerable individual, the following steps must be taken:

- Reassure them that they were right to report the behavior.
- Listen carefully and calmly to them and ask questions to clarify the allegation so that you will be able to later report the incident correctly.
- During the conversation, try not to repeat the same questions to the individual, as this gives them the impression that they did not give correct information the first time and they are not fully believed.
- Do not compromise secrecy to the individual. Inform them that you must report the incident or inappropriate behavior as it is in their best interest.
- Take proper steps to ensure the immediate physical safety and psychological wellbeing of the individual. Make certain you distinguish between what they have actually said and the inference you may have made. Accuracy is paramount in this stage of the procedure.
- Do not permit personal doubt to prevent you from reporting the allegation to the proper authority.

- Let the individual know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

## **2. Allegations from another Source**

DEW must take all appropriate steps within its power to protect the vulnerable individual in question from further harm. If the concerns involve immediate harm, the member of staff must act without delay, as inaction may place the vulnerable individual in further danger. If a member of staff knows any information about the maltreatment of a vulnerable individual, it is their responsibility to tell someone. All staff must therefore act immediately and report suspicions, however uncertain, to the designated person (or nominated deputy) in accordance with the Reporting Procedure outlined above.

### **Reporting**

Reporting to Shah Abdus Salam, Executive Director, Development Wheel (DEW), Contact Number: 01715120140, Email:dewsalam@gmail.com

### **Violation of the Policy**

If an allegation of a violation of the safeguarding policies, guidelines, principles or practices is made concerning a named individual from a verifiable source against any member of staff, they may be suspended from all activity and association with DEW pending the outcome of an impartial investigation. During this time, staff will continue to receive full pay.

If following the investigation it is decided that there is a case to answer against a member of staff, disciplinary action under the Managing Conduct policy will be recommended.

DEW will also take other action, which may be appropriate under the circumstances. This may mean for example for:

- Volunteers – ending the relationship with DEW
- Partners – withdrawal of funding and/or support
- Contractors – termination of contract

Depending on the nature, circumstances and geographical location of the case, DEW will also consider involving authorities such as the police to ensure the protection of vulnerable individuals and adherence to the law where this is appropriate.

### **Maintaining Records**

DEW has a standardized system for reporting incidents, concerns and referrals, which ensures that such information is stored securely.

DEW management will retain a copy of allegations made, and action taken. Where investigated, the investigation report will be retained in the member of staff's personal file. The record will contain details of the allegation, how it was followed up, investigated, resolved and what, if any, action was taken. The record will be maintained on the member of staff's personal file for the duration of their employment with DEW; even where it was determined there was no case to answer.

Managers have a particular responsibility in maintaining the confidentiality of these records and must ensure that their records, or any information they contain, are made available only to relevant parties.

## **Monitoring**

DEW Boards will be provided with an annual report to allow them to verify the effectiveness of this policy and which includes:

- Data regarding any incidents, allegations or investigations
- Where appropriate, a summary of actions undertaken
- Summary data relating to Safeguarding training provided.

**DEW reserves the right to vary the terms of the policy if the needs of the organisation change or other circumstances deem it necessary.**

## **Secondary safeguarding mechanisms**

DEW will continue to establish secondary safeguarding mechanisms to mitigate abuse risks for its people and the high-risk groups within them. Some of those mechanisms have a general character; they work across programmes, enterprises and countries. Others are very specific; they work within a single programme or activity or a country. The ethos work mentioned above is, of course, the first general line of defense against abuse. Other general mechanisms are the attention paid to safeguarding in the recruitment and selection process and in the induction and training of employees; the regular practice of risk analysis; line management responsibility and action; the deterrence achieved through the repression outlined below.

## **Recruitment and Selection**

DEW will continue to ensure it assesses the eligibility of candidates from a safeguarding perspective. Following steps should be taken throughout the hiring process, from designing the job description to formal engagement of the employee to minimize the risk of engaging someone who may pose an unacceptable risk to children, adolescents, adults with special needs and women. In summary, the following will be considered when planning recruitment:

- Job descriptions for all positions - make reference to responsibilities for safeguarding and/ or the Code of Conduct and include the beliefs and values of the organization or link to them.
- Advertisement - make clear the organization's commitment to safeguarding.
- Short listing - obtain and scrutinize information in applications/CVs - resolve any gaps, discrepancies or anomalies in employment history.
- Interviews - include questions around safeguarding, the Code of Conduct and working with children, adolescents, adults with special needs and women.
- Self-disclosure - the shortlisted candidates will sign a self-disclosure form stating that they have not been involved in any crime, illegal act, sexual harassment or child abuse case previously.
- Background/reference checks - verify the successful applicant's identity, their employment history, and qualifications. Offers should not be confirmed until all checks have been completed.
- External checks - conducted according to organizational policy and country requirements where required, police verification should be conducted.

## **Education/training**

DEW will continue to make safeguarding an important element of the education and training of its staff. It will do that both in the induction of all employees and in the training of professionals for specific functions.

- Every new hire will receive a brief introduction to the vision, mission and values of DEW, the Code of Conduct and the Safeguarding policy and duly acknowledge all of these as part of their induction.
- DEW management is committed to ensuring that aspects of safeguarding that are relevant to specific work processes are always part of the professional training of all staff and that, where needed, this training will be regularly repeated.
- DEW management will continue to make sure that the professionals who handle the cases and complaints have competencies in line with the highest standards and the best practices.
- DEW management will regularly across the programmes and enterprises organize campaigns to create awareness about safeguarding. The campaigns will be precisely targeted and tailored to ensure that they are relevant to the staff and participants in question. They will have a very varied character.

## **Risk Analysis**

DEW will in future, if it knows risks of abuse are present in a process and suspects that they are insufficiently mitigated, proactively undertake an in-depth analysis of process, risks and risk enhancing factors. That analysis will be based on dossiers, observations and interviews. It will result in recommendations to redesign the work process and/or to add or change secondary safeguarding mechanisms. Such a risk analysis will already have a deterrent effect. The implementation of its recommendations will lower risk and raise mitigation structurally. The risk analysis practice should be seen as the main element in the framework of iterative learning around safeguarding. From a long-term perspective the practice has a cyclical character.

## **Line management and prevention**

Within DEW, line managers have direct responsibility for preventing abuse. They have to make sure that safe designs are implemented and that secondary safeguarding mechanisms are maintained. They have to understand residual risks of abuse that are connected with processes and events and have to mitigate those, where necessary and possible. They have to make sure that employees are familiar with the ethos of DEW and with the general and relevant specific safeguarding policies.

Line managers have a unique responsibility to stop abuse. They are the ones that are in the position and have the power to make sure that it ends. They therefore have the obligation to immediately intervene whenever they witness abuse or are alerted to it. Finally, line managers within DEW are responsible for creating an atmosphere of openness and accountability within their teams that makes it possible for witnesses and victims to come forward to use the complaint mechanism in place.

It is a vital element of prevention that top management in a visible manner takes responsibility for safeguarding. That gives everybody in the organization the unequivocal message that all forms of abuse are unacceptable, that the organization takes the fight against them seriously, that perpetrators will be punished, and victims will be supported. DEW's top management always has and will continue to embrace this responsibility.

**Review of the policy**

This policy will be reviewed as and when necessary by the management of DEW.