



HEART فريق الإغاثة والتعزيز الإنساني

Humanitarian Empowerment and Relief Team

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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This document establishes HEART's safeguarding commitments and minimum standards. It should be customized with operational contact details and aligned with applicable national laws in countries of operation.

Document Control

Document Title	HEART Safeguarding Policy
Designated Safeguarding Focal Point	PSEA Officer
Approved by	Board of Directors (BoDs)
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This policy is a core governance and accountability document. It shall be read together with HEART's Code of Conduct, PSEA Policy, Whistleblowing/Complaints Procedures, and relevant HR and program manuals.

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1. Introduction and Policy Statement

Safeguarding means promoting and protecting the health, well-being, dignity, and human rights of individuals, enabling them to live free from harm, exploitation, and abuse. A safeguarding approach requires HEART to ensure that it does not expose children, young people, or vulnerable adults—including affected populations, staff, volunteers, and partners—to the risk of discrimination, neglect, injury, or abuse, and that any safeguarding concerns are addressed promptly and reported through appropriate channels.

In this policy, safeguarding is conceived as protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment (SH), intimidation and violence, bullying, humiliation and discrimination, neglect, and exploitation. Safeguarding is integral to HEART's mission to deliver principled, inclusive, and effective humanitarian assistance and empowerment programs that place affected populations at the center.

HEART commits to the following pledges:

1. Safeguarding of staff and affected populations is a primary guiding principle in all programs and operations.
2. Safeguarding commitments are reflected in HEART's values, Code of Conduct, and operational procedures.
3. Safeguarding is incorporated into program design, implementation, monitoring, and learning (MEAL).
4. Where necessary, additional safeguarding mechanisms are established, maintained, and resourced.
5. Safeguarding risks are actively identified and addressed through continuous improvement and learning.
6. Survivor-centred and confidential approaches guide response and support to those harmed.

2. Scope of Application

This policy applies across all HEART operations and programs, in Sudan and in any other country where HEART operates. It applies to safeguarding risks that arise within HEART's span of control and sphere of influence, including where delivery involves downstream partners.

This policy applies equally to:

1. General Assembly members and the Board of Directors (BoDs);
2. All staff contracted by HEART (under any contractual mechanism);
3. Volunteers, consultants, interns, and any personnel acting on behalf of HEART;
4. Partners and service providers where agreements include safeguarding requirements;
5. Affected populations and other community members who interact with HEART.

3. Safeguarding Principles

HEART is committed to the following principles that underpin all safeguarding actions and decisions:

1. **Empowerment:** People are enabled and motivated to make their own choices, based on clear information and genuine consent.
2. **Prevention:** Acting in advance is ideal, and safeguarding is integrated into planning and day-to-day activities to prevent harm before it occurs.
3. **Proportionality:** The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
4. **Protection:** Extra help and advocacy are provided to those most at risk; HEART carries a duty of care.
5. **Partnership:** Community-led approaches, with services working alongside local people to prevent, identify, and report abuse.
6. **Accountability:** Transparency and accountability in safeguarding commitments, actions, and outcomes.

4. Standards of Behaviour (Do No Harm)

To keep the risk of harm to children, young people, and vulnerable adults as low as reasonably practicable, HEART strictly prohibits the following behaviours. These standards apply to all personnel and associated personnel acting on behalf of HEART.

1. Sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of local age of consent or mistaken belief about age.
2. Any form of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of community members or affected populations.
3. Any sexual relationship with a community member/beneficiary that involves the exchange of money, employment, goods, services, or other benefits.
4. Sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature.
5. Physical assault, hitting, or any form of violence against children or adults.
6. Any act that puts a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm, including negligence and unsafe practices.
7. Bullying, humiliation, intimidation, or discrimination based on gender, religion, ethnicity, disability, age, race, or other status.
8. Abuse of power or position to take unfair advantage of staff, volunteers, partners, or community members.
9. Retaliation against anyone who raises a safeguarding concern in good faith.

5. Safeguarding Practices and Prevention

5.1 Organizational Ethos

HEART recognizes that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. HEART promotes an environment that helps children and vulnerable adults feel safe, respected, and heard. HEART aims to reduce the likelihood of harm by:

1. Creating safe, inclusive, and accessible program environments and activities.
2. Providing clear information to communities on their rights and how to raise complaints.
3. Ensuring physical safety measures in facilities, distributions, and community activities.
4. Ensuring staff and volunteers can recognize signs of abuse and know reporting lines.
5. Maintaining secure and confidential records, shared only on a need-to-know basis.
6. Strengthening liaison and referral pathways with competent authorities and specialist services.

5.2 Safe Program Design and Risk Management

Safeguarding must be integrated into project design, implementation, and monitoring. HEART will:

1. Conduct safeguarding and PSEA risk assessments during design and prior to major activities.
2. Ensure programming includes mitigation measures (e.g., safe site layouts, lighting, crowd control, data protection).
3. Ensure meaningful participation of women, girls, persons with disabilities, and other at-risk groups.
4. Apply "Do No Harm" principles and conflict-sensitive approaches where relevant.
5. Include safeguarding requirements in partner agreements and conduct partner due diligence.

5.3 Line Management Responsibilities

Managers have direct responsibilities in preventing abuse. They must ensure that risk mitigation measures are implemented and that staff understand and follow this policy. Managers must intervene immediately if they witness abuse or are alerted to it, and must create a team culture that enables reporting without fear.

6. Safe Recruitment, Vetting, and Workforce Management

HEART is committed to safe recruitment, selection, and vetting of staff, trustees, and volunteers. Recruitment and workforce management processes will include safeguarding measures proportional to the role and risk.

1. Vacancy announcements and Terms of Reference will affirm HEART's commitment to safeguarding and the Code of Conduct.
2. Shortlisting will pay attention to unexplained gaps in employment and frequent changes of employer/address.
3. All offers are conditional upon satisfactory references (minimum two), including questions on conduct and disciplinary history.
4. Interviews will explore candidates' attitudes and motivation regarding humanitarian values and working with vulnerable groups.

5. Essential qualifications and relevant accreditations will be verified.
6. Proof of identity (passport or ID) is required before engagement.
7. All personnel must sign and abide by HEART's Code of Conduct and safeguarding commitments as a condition of employment/engagement.
8. Where legally available and relevant, background checks may be conducted in line with national laws and data protection.

6.1 Managing and Deploying Personnel

HEART will maintain appropriate supervision, clear reporting lines, and mechanisms to address misconduct, including prompt suspension of duties where required to manage risk during investigations.

7. Training, Awareness, and Communications

Safeguarding is embedded from the beginning of the employee journey and reinforced throughout. HEART will:

1. Provide all new personnel with induction on HEART's mission, values, Code of Conduct, PSEA, and this Safeguarding Policy.
2. Provide role-specific training for managers and those handling complaints and investigations.
3. Conduct periodic awareness sessions for staff, volunteers, partners, and communities, tailored to context and language.
4. Ensure information on complaints and reporting channels is visible, accessible, and culturally appropriate.
5. Promote safe and respectful communications, including safe imagery and responsible data handling.

8. Reporting, Case Management, and Response

HEART will ensure safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns to staff, affected populations, and other stakeholders. Reports can be made anonymously where feasible.

8.1 Reporting Channels

Reports may be submitted through one or more of the following channels:

1. Directly to the PSEA Officer (Designated Safeguarding Focal Point) in person or by phone.
2. To a line manager, Country Director, or the CEO/SG (who must forward immediately to the safeguarding focal point).
3. Through a confidential complaints mechanism (hotline and/or email).
4. Through community feedback mechanisms (complaints boxes, helpdesks, trusted community focal points), where established.

8.2 Survivor-Centered Response

HEART adopts a survivor-centred approach. Safety, confidentiality, respect, and informed choice guide all actions. Where needed and feasible, HEART will support survivors to access medical care, psychosocial support, and protection services through appropriate referrals. Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.

8.3 Case Management and Investigation

All safeguarding reports will be triaged promptly to determine immediate safety actions, referral needs, and the appropriate internal or external response. HEART will:

1. Take immediate steps to prevent further harm and manage risk.
2. Maintain a secure case file and record key decisions and actions.
3. Conduct internal investigations where appropriate and lawful, using trained personnel and due process.
4. Report crimes to relevant law enforcement authorities unless doing so may pose a risk to anyone involved.
5. Apply disciplinary measures for substantiated breaches, up to and including termination and referral to authorities.
6. Ensure protection from retaliation for complainants and witnesses who report in good faith.

9. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

All safeguarding matters are confidential. Information relating to concerns and case management will be shared only on a need-to-know basis, stored securely, and handled in accordance with applicable laws and data protection principles. Staff must not promise to keep secrets that might compromise a person's safety or well-being.

10. Working with Partners and Authorities

HEART recognizes the importance of working with competent authorities and specialist agencies to protect people from harm. HEART is not the investigating authority for statutory child protection matters and will refer cases to relevant authorities and specialized services, while supporting affected persons throughout the process as appropriate.

Where HEART works through partners, safeguarding requirements will be integrated into partner selection, contracting, monitoring, and capacity support. HEART may suspend or terminate partnerships where safeguarding standards are not met.

11. Governance, Oversight, and Accountability

Safeguarding is overseen through HEART's governance structure. The Board of Directors has a supervisory role and ensures that safeguarding is integrated into organizational policies and risk management. The CEO/SG carries executive accountability for safeguarding implementation. Country Directors, managers, and the PSEA Officer ensure operational implementation and compliance.

11.1 Roles and Responsibilities (Summary)

Board of Directors (BoDs)

1. Approve safeguarding and PSEA policies and oversee organizational compliance.
2. Receive periodic safeguarding reports (anonymized) and ensure corrective actions are resourced.
3. Ensure independent oversight for serious cases and risk management decisions.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

1. Ensure this policy is implemented across the organization and integrated into strategies and operations.
2. Ensure appropriate structures, resources, and trained personnel are in place for safeguarding.
3. Ensure serious incidents are reported to the Board in line with reporting protocols.

PSEA Officer (Designated Safeguarding Focal Point)

1. Receive and manage safeguarding reports, ensuring safe and timely response.
2. Maintain confidential case records and coordinate investigations and referrals.
3. Lead safeguarding/PSEA training and awareness, and advise on risk mitigation.

Country Directors and Managers

1. Implement safeguarding risk mitigation in programs and operations.
2. Promote a speak-up culture and ensure staff and communities know reporting channels.
3. Take immediate action to prevent harm and support safe referrals.

MEAL Director

1. Ensure community feedback and accountability mechanisms support safeguarding.
2. Support monitoring, learning, and reporting of safeguarding performance and improvements.

All Personnel and Associated Personnel

1. Understand and comply with this policy and HEART's Code of Conduct.
2. Report concerns promptly and cooperate with safeguarding processes.

11.2 Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy shall be reviewed at least annually, and after any significant incident, major contextual changes, or changes in legal requirements. Lessons learned will be used to strengthen prevention and response.