



**CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT SAFEGUARDING
POLICY**

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Revised in March 2026

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1. Introduction

Human Development and Community Services (HDCS) is a Nepali nonprofit and non-governmental organization working in four sectors of health, education, community development and disaster management.

HDCS believes that every child and adult have the right to protection and to live in a safe environment, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, disability, age, displacement, caste, gender, sexual orientation, and economic status. HDCS is committed to the safety and well-being of every individual and promotes the dignity of all vulnerable people. HDCS is committed to protecting children, young people and the most marginalized and vulnerable adults from unintended harm and abuse and ensure that our practices minimize the risk of all harm.

Our goal through this policy is to protect any child and vulnerable adult from falling victim to abuse. Every person working for HDCS or related to the activities of our organization is responsible for helping to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, exploitation and abuse. Our objective is to create and maintain a protective environment for children and vulnerable adults while delivering our services.

This Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy provides a framework of guidelines on which the members of the organization or anyone in relation to the organization, who have access to children and vulnerable adults or their personal information through his/her own affiliation with HDCS are required to follow these standards that protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse and help create a child and vulnerable adult friendly environment. Associations with anyone found to be engaging in abusive and exploitative relationships with children and vulnerable adults will be broken immediately and legal action will be taken.

HDCS will work with local law enforcement authorities, government departments, INGOs/NGOs and Local Civil Society organizations to promote safer communities, prevent harm and abuse and to deal with suspected or actual cases of abuse.

HDCS is committed to bringing awareness of child and vulnerable adult abuse and exploitation, shared with our partners, to create and maintain a protected environment for our children and vulnerable adults. This policy will be reviewed every two years and at times when necessary to develop and improve protocols and implementation. The Board of Directors herein referred to as the Executive Committee holds the right to approve and make changes to the policy. This policy has been approved by the Executive Committee. Reports on incidents relating to protection of children and vulnerable adults will be reported by the Central Safeguarding Committee (CSC) to the Internal Management Team (IMT) who will then report to the Executive Committee (EC) on a quarterly basis. The CSC will effectively embody the responsibility of evaluating and overseeing the implementation of this policy thereby acting in the capacity as the Safeguarding Committee and Response Team.

In this policy document child refers to any person under the age of 18 as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and vulnerable adult is someone who is 18 years or over who may be in need of community care due to a mental health problem, learning disability, physical disability, age or illness and as a result, they may find it difficult to protect themselves from abuse. For more definitions, please refer to Appendix D.

All HDCS projects may also develop operational policies which implement similar or superior policies and procedures to guide the implementation of child and vulnerable safeguarding standards. This updated policy combines and supersedes previous HDCS policies: Child Safeguarding Policy and Prevention of Sexual Assault and Harassment (PSEAH).

2. Scope of the policy

Personnel who have a contractual agreement with HDCS, or any volunteers (local or international) with direct contact with children and/or vulnerable adults through one of our projects, are bound to abide by this policy and the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Code of Conduct. All such personnel will be required to read this policy and sign the Code of Conduct (COC) before association with HDCS. All heads of projects are accountable for the implementation of this Safeguarding Policy in their project location.

More specifically, this policy applies to:

- a. HDCS personnel from Headquarters (HQ) and all HDCS projects and programs.
- b. Volunteers including:
 - unpaid foreign and long-term volunteers on a HDCS visa
 - unpaid foreign or local short-term volunteers
 - unpaid foreign or local volunteers or any visitors of projects where children and vulnerable adults are present

- c. Personnel from local partner organizations subcontracted by HDCS
- d. Individual contractors and consultants
- e. Multilateral organizations and bilateral donor partners funding the organization
- f. Media/journalists

3. Safeguarding Principles

HDCS's general Safeguarding Principles are:

- Safeguard the well-being of all individuals
- **Respect and promote dignity** of the poor and carry out equal treatment regardless of ethnicity, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability
- All children and vulnerable adults have the **right to protection** from all kinds of abuse and exploitation
- HDCS has a duty of care to children and vulnerable adults with whom they work, are in contact with, or who are affected by their work and operations
- HDCS has a responsibility to help partner(s) meet the minimum requirement on protection
- HDCS is responsible to ensure protective and safe environments to its beneficiaries.
- All activity is done in the best interests and benefits of the children/vulnerable adults.
- Ensure all staff, partners, beneficiaries, suppliers understand the meaning of safeguarding.

With regards to Prevention of Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment:

- There will be **“Zero Tolerance”** for Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment (SEAH).
- **Strong Leadership** accelerates culture change - HDCS management to work alongside supporting partners to assess SEAH risk at a project, to set up risk monitoring and processes to mitigate against the risks, and ensuring that their project partners have systems and processes in place.
- **Victim/Survivor-centric approach** needs to be prioritized - Any concern or complaint about an SEAH situation, must be investigated rigorously and quickly, with regards to the relevant law enforcement bodies and with confidentiality.
- **Preventing sexual abuse and harassment is a shared responsibility:** Make plans to strengthen HDCS's capacity to deal with SEAH, including training staff in PSEAH. To ensure protection and safeguarding are always considered and integrated into relevant core internal processes such as: planning and project design, partner agreements, risk management, monitoring and accountability mechanisms and recruitment processes.
- **Gender inequality** and other power imbalances are addressed.
- **Stronger reporting and documentation will enhance accountability and transparency:** Any concern or complaint about an SEAH situation, must be investigated rigorously and quickly, with regards to the relevant law enforcement bodies and with confidentiality.

In order to ensure safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, the following prevention activities will be carried out.

A. Guidelines for Images and Media

- HDCS has a consent form that must be available to all HDCS personnel
- Obtain informed consent from the child/vulnerable adult and their parent/guardian before photographing or filming any child or adult at risk
- Obtain written permission from HDCS for external media sharing
- Respect local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming any children or adults at risk
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts
- Not to present children and vulnerable adults as victims but to ensure their dignity
- Ensure children and vulnerable adults are dressed appropriately and are not in sexually suggestive poses
- Not to use sensitive information about the child's or vulnerable adult's name or location
- Use computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras, or social media appropriately and not to exploit or harass children or vulnerable adults
- No social networking with students. If project activity is related then only with consent and prior knowledge of their parent/guardian. (*In the case of education project*)
- Ensure that there are no names, locations or other identifying information used when publishing any form of communication about a child or vulnerable adult
- Ensure that all images of children and vulnerable adults are stored safely and only accessible to those with permission to use them.
- HDCS discourages direct, un-facilitated, undocumented communication through social media without HDCS' knowledge between HDCS' personnel and children or vulnerable adults.

B. Recruitment and Screening

HDCS will ensure safe recruitment practices by strict screening, verbal reference checks, and background checks.

All HDCS personnel who have access to children and vulnerable adult or their personal information through his/her own affiliation with HDCS will follow these measures:

- a. Having clear job descriptions for all staff which will be assessed for the level of contact with children and vulnerable adult
- b. All job advertisements will include mention of HDCS' Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy, and the HDCS website will also include mention of this policy with a downloadable link
- c. Ensuring candidates provide at least two written references and their most recent employer as reference
- d. Ensuring the application and interview questions include questions about their behavior towards children and vulnerable adults
- e. Ensuring that all candidates for staff, foreign and international volunteers and interns have a background check, identification check, criminal record/police background check prior to employment

- f. Ensuring all new staff, short-term and long-term volunteers have Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding training included in their induction
- g. Ensuring that all personnel have signed the Code of Conduct

HDCS reserves the right not to hire an applicant or to terminate an employment, if the recruitment process or background check reveals that the person is not suitable to work in an environment where there will be children and/or vulnerable adults.

C. Increasing awareness and Training

- CSC will provide research or send participant(s) to attend training regarding international standards and Nepali legislation for Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding and Protection.
- CSC will ensure all current and future HDCS personnel receive training of this policy, as well as, access to a copy (translated into Nepali). Refresher training will be conducted for staff regularly, at a minimum on an annual basis and will also see to the audits of the procedures being implemented.
- A project work plan will be integrated that includes compulsory training on Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding before being deployed to project areas.
- HDCS staff must:
 - a) Immediately report any concerns of child and vulnerable adult exploitation and abuse, by anyone covered by this policy
 - b) Complete Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Training and acknowledge their responsibility by signing the Code of Conduct (Appendix A).

D. Safeguarding Focal Personnel

A **Central Safeguarding Committee (CSC)** is designated by the Executive Director (ED)/ IMT to oversee HDCS' obligations described in this policy. The role of the CSC is to ensure that the risks of harm to children and vulnerable adults are prevented and they are responsible for receiving and responding to complaints of abuses across HDCS's work areas. The CSC as outlined in Section C above will lead in all of the aforementioned responsibilities. The CSC and IMT have the ultimate responsibility to oversee effective implementation of the policy and will report to the Executive Director of any incidents and to conduct the investigations.

In all HDCS's offices or projects, a **designated Local Safeguarding Focal Person (LSFP)** will be assigned by either the CSC as nominated by the respective head of project and will be responsible for implementing the policy. He/she will also coordinate and work closely with the CSC.

The appointed Local Safeguarding Focal Person (LSFP), is responsible for the following:

- Ensure all new staff and volunteers have signed the code of conduct for their assigned project location
- Receive verbal or written complaints from HDCS personnel, or any children/vulnerable adult that may be beneficiaries of HDCS services from their project location

- Immediately notify LSFP/CSC of an incident in their project location by phone or email and ensure all complaints are followed up in writing within 24 hours. If any member of the LSFP/ CSC is not available follow protocol as outlined in Appendix B
- Ensure and help follow-up with any actions appointed by LSFP/CSC in a confidential manner and will regularly implement awareness materials provided from LSFP/ CSC
- Monitor and assess for any potential risks in the project location, especially when new activities are added

The LSFP will report any case of abuse from their location to the CSC. The procedures in Appendix B and C will be followed accordingly.

E. Risk Management

- Child/vulnerable adult protection risk assessments will be conducted for all current projects and identified risks will have mitigation strategies put in place.
- Risk assessment will be conducted for all new projects, at project design or proposal stage, with mitigation for any risks involved.
- The child/vulnerable adult safeguarding incident reporting framework will be publicly displayed in all project locations, translated into local languages and child-friendly versions, and beneficiaries made aware of the framework and how to report any incidents.
- Documentation will be kept of beneficiaries' consent for any photos, videos taken.
- Photos, video will be stored securely, only accessible to those staff who need to access them, with no identifying features in the file names and no real names used in publishing the photos.
- CSC will conduct a child and vulnerable adult safeguarding audit once every two years.

4. Complaints and Reporting

All incidents of child/vulnerable adult abuse, whether observed or reported by the child or another person, will be reported immediately (within 24 hours) by staff members to the relevant LSFP at their project location.

- It is everyone's responsibility to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults, however, there will be certain roles and procedures to follow in the case of reporting abuse by the shared responsibility of the LSFP and the CSC. IMT or ED is also responsible for making decisions that require further support with regards to incidents and matters of safeguarding.
- The Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Reporting Chart will be publicly displayed in all project locations, along with the staff Code of Conduct.
- The LSFP/ CSC is responsible for making the project staff aware about the policy and the reporting process. Any behavior suspected to be child/vulnerable adult exploitation and abuse, including possession of child/vulnerable adult exploitation material, or policy non-compliance by any other staff members or personnel is to be reported to them. The LSFP will be responsible for vetting reports as to whether they are an internal or external concern and then these will be reported to the HQ CSC. The internal concerns will be reported as outlined in the Reporting Flowchart and Reporting Form (Appendix B and C),

the external concerns must be notified to the HQ CSC who can help the staff member refer it to the appropriate person/agency/authority.

- At each project level there will be a focal person where victims, survivors and witnesses can report any sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) incident, using the incident reporting form (Appendix C).
- HQ CSFP is reported about all incidents of abuse, after the LSFP has vetted the report if the abuse case is an internal concern, the HQ CSC should be informed within 24 hours.
- The personnel involved in the case are considered innocent until proven guilty but will be removed from contact with the children/vulnerable adults during investigation.
- The reaction from the HQ will vary according to the offense. Depending on the case, the staff member may receive a verbal warning and follow-up training or support to better understand and follow the CSC.
- If the incident constitutes a crime, such as serious assault, sex abuse or any other matter that has breached the policy and the legislation of Nepal, will be reported to the police following immediate termination of the staff/volunteer member's contract.
- HQ will cooperate with partner organization(s) to ensure proper follow-up with investigation/s.
- After an incident, all measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality both for the child/vulnerable adult and the alleged perpetrator.

5. Complaint Handling Process & Procedures

5.1 When HDCS staff receive a disclosure: the first steps

These steps help a staff at HDCS know how to handle a concern of an incident report that is made to them of abuse or maltreatment:

1. If a child or vulnerable person has approached you, make sure they know they have done the right thing. Remember to take all claims seriously.
2. Stay calm. Do not display shock, anger or embarrassment. Listen carefully to their story and respect their rights.
3. Notify the child or vulnerable person that only the people who need to know will be informed. The staff will reassure children or vulnerable adults that they have done the right thing by coming forward and not promise them that they will keep it a secret but explain that they need to tell someone else (those who are appointed to handle the case). Reassure and explain the next steps that need to be taken in order to help them.
4. Disclosures from Children or Vulnerable Adults will be treated with sensitivity and without pressing for information only ask questions for clarification. Write up their narrative, giving as much detail as possible. Remember to include date and time, what was said and any names and locations.
5. Disclosure or concerns reported by children or vulnerable adults should also be received on the basis that information may be shared with relevant authorities.
6. No staff member or volunteer will prejudice their own standing at work but ensure that they responsibly report potential or suspected children or vulnerable adult's abuse.
7. Don't disclose any information to non-relevant parties. Don't try to solve the situation yourself or confront anyone. Any person making a report should not: 1) notify the person to whom the claim

or allegation relates 2) seek to independently investigate or substantiate the claim prior to making notification.

After the disclosure, take these steps:

1. Make a report of what you've seen and any evidence that would support your claim, including time and date. I.e. Fill up the incident report in Appendix C also found at www.hdcsnepal.org under policies tab on the main menu.
2. Contact your LSFP immediately and inform them of the situation using the report you made. The LSFP will directly contact any child protection agency, the police or simply provide further advice. When the LSFP is not available, contact the CSC. LSFP/ CSC should always be available to support this process.

5.2 Complaint Handling Procedures by LSFP/ CSC/ IMT:

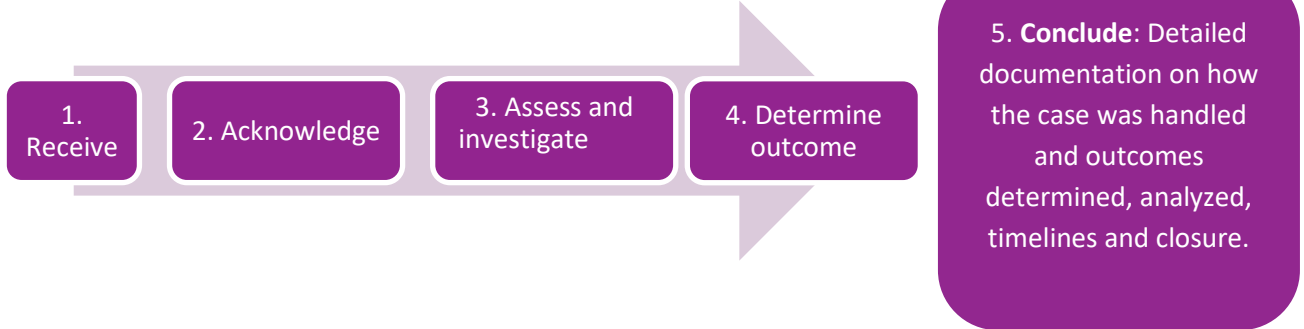
- **Safety & Confidentiality:** A person-centered approach will be taken – prioritizing victims' and survivors' safety and well-being. Treating them with dignity and respect must be paramount to reporting and their information treated confidentially. They need to be involved in the decision-making process, such that they will not be put to further risk of harm. **Whistle-blowers** must also feel safe and protected during the reporting process. LSFP/CSC will take whatever action is appropriate, necessary, and possible, without risk of further harm to any individual and to ensure the safety of those involved. Where children or vulnerable adults are concerned, their welfare will be the utmost consideration.
- **Parental Involvement:** When a minor is involved, and if the alleged perpetrator is **not a parent or guardian**, they must typically be notified before the child is interviewed, unless the child is in imminent danger (first priority is to remove them from harm). It is important to inform the parent/ guardian within 24 hours that a complaint has been received regarding their child EXCEPT in the case if the parent/ guardian is involved or the perpetrator. When a parent/ guardian is the alleged perpetrator, in such cases, legal authority or third party organization may be involved for arbitration/ case handling as decided by the IMT/ ED.
- **Swift Action:** Complaints and concerns will always be investigated and acted upon swiftly. A response must be made within 24 hours of an initial report being received (in the case of a serious allegation where there may be further harm to a child or adult at risk then action must be immediate to remove the potential victims(s) from the situation).
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Anyone at HDCS may receive any concerns/ complaints but are not the one to handle the case. Only designated and appointed LSFP will handle the case.
- **Documentation:** LSFP will ensure that the incident is documented using the Incident Reporting form (Appendix C). They will conduct an initial assessment, document it and determine the next steps as appropriate. Matters as necessary will be shared with the Safeguarding Team or Central Safeguarding Committee as/when appropriate.
- **Risk Assessment:** The LSFP receiving the complaint should make a risk assessment for the immediate future and do whatever they can to mitigate these risks. They must carefully record the complaint and pass the record, without delay, to any member of the CSC.

- **Anonymity:** If the incident reporter requests to be anonymous, HDCS will respect his/her choice and only when an intentional false accusation is found after investigation, HDCS will further manage the issues as a staff management issue.
- **Counseling/psychosocial support:** If the alleged perpetrator is the person who has no affiliation with HDCS, the CSC/LSFP will still record the incident and provide necessary psychosocial support to the survivor and the family.
- If the alleged perpetrator is the person who has affiliation with HDCS, the Director will convene the meeting. This must be held within 24 hours. If urgent action is required to protect the children/vulnerable adults or others, then this should be done immediately.
- The meeting will be to assess the concern and decide next steps, including who else needs to be kept informed. Parents or guardians of children or vulnerable adults involved will also be informed if appropriate. Apart from this, careful confidentiality will be observed.
- The meeting may instigate an investigation if it is thought that there may have been a breach of organizational policy or standards. The meeting will designate an investigating officer and an investigation team and will continue to guide and monitor the process.
- The ED must notify the Executive Committee (EC) within 24 hours of receipt of a reported crime under this policy.
- In the event that the allegations relate to the ED of HDCS, then the Chair of the EC shall be the person immediately notified.
- All HDCS representatives and implementing partners are required to immediately (see above paragraph) notify the relevant ED of that partner organization if any person working, volunteering, or visiting HDCS projects is accused/suspected of, charged with, arrested for or convicted of criminal offences relating to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. If the allegation relates to the ED of that partner organization, then the Chair of that partner organization shall be the person immediately notified.
- Any non-compliant policy incident shall be followed up within five working days; for example, failure to adhere to this policy's minimum standards or principles.
- Any person making a report should not notify the person to whom the claim or allegation relates to and seek to independently investigate or substantiate the claim prior to making notification.
- If in doubt as to whether to report an incident, in line with HDCS's zero tolerance of inaction, individuals and organizations found not reporting alleged incidents will be viewed as non-compliant.
- The responsibility to follow up the incident and to liaise with relevant investigating authorities' rests with the ED of HDCS or partner organizations where the accused is not from HDCS. Alternatively, in case of allegations against the ED of HDCS or other partner organizations, the responsibility lies with the chair of the governing board or the Chair of EC as in the case of HDCS.
- **Legal action:** In accordance with the victims wishes, and if it is safe to do so, all alleged incidents that involve a criminal aspect shall be reported through the relevant and correct law enforcement channels.

5.3 Retaliation

HDCS prohibits any staff from retaliating in any way against anyone who has raised any concern about harassment, sexual harassment or discrimination against another individual. No adverse employment action will be taken for any employee making a good faith report of alleged harassment.

5.4 The stages of the complaint management system:



*For more detail refer to HDCS Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures.

6. Investigation Process

The responsibilities of the investigation team

- The investigation team will gather evidence and interview relevant parties in order to establish the probable facts where the non-statutory cases or statutory cases investigation has been non-existent or inadequate.
- The investigation team will also make recommendations on improving the policies and practices that may have enabled the breach of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults as well as on how to rebuild community trust and on what help should be provided to minimize the harm to survivors of the incident.
- If a member of staff is the subject of an allegation, that staff member will be asked to take leave from their duties until an investigation has been completed. If a volunteer is the subject of an allegation, that volunteer will be asked to withdraw from their work until an investigation has been completed. In both cases, it should be made clear that suspension does not imply guilt but rather protects all parties whilst an investigation is undertaken.
- HDCS will provide psychological support and other emergency support to both the alleged survivor and the alleged abused as far as possible whilst an investigation is carried out.

7. Data Protection

HDCS is committed to apply the highest levels of protection in the processing of personal data and to treat all information received with utmost confidentiality. Consent forms must be signed prior to taking photographs of videography.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

HDCS will monitor the implementation of the **policy, review and evaluate every 2 years** on the effectiveness of the policy and make any changes as needed. A report of the development of this policy relating to review, amendments and evaluations will be provided to the Executive Committee.

Appendix A – HDCS Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Code of Conduct

HDCS believes that all children and vulnerable adults should be safe from harm and abuse. The main purpose of this Code of Conduct (COC) is to provide protection to children and vulnerable adults and is also intended to protect staff and the organization from false accusations of inappropriate behavior or abuse. Personnel who have a contractual agreement with HDCS, or any volunteers with direct contact with children through one of our projects, are bound to abide by these behavioral protocols. Failure to comply with the COC may result in legal action and/or disciplinary measures, including termination (if contractual), and discontinuation of involvement (visitors and 'others')

I, _____ [insert name], acknowledge that I have read and understood the HDCS Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy, and agree that in the course of my association with HDCS,

I must

- Be truthful in the recruitment process and on declaring previous criminal convictions when applying to work for HDCS.
- Comply with all relevant safeguarding international standards and all relevant Nepali legislation.
- Treat all children and adults with respect regardless of discriminatory factors such as gender, caste, religion or disability.
- Ensure whenever possible, that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children, also known as the "two-adult rule."
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child/vulnerable adult abuse, especially those committed by anyone associated with HDCS, in accordance with the Reporting Framework from the HDCS Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy. Failure to report any concerns of abuse constitutes a violation of the Code of Conduct.

I must NOT

- Physically assault or physically abuse children or vulnerable adults.
- Develop sexual relationships with children or vulnerable adults.
- Place myself in a position where I could be accused of sexually abusing a child or vulnerable adult.
- Use language or behavior towards children/adults that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally inappropriate.
- Behave in an inappropriate physical manner e.g. touching, viewing or holding private parts of children or vulnerable adults, fondle, hold, kiss, hug, or touch minors and vulnerable adults in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Offer benefits such as food, clothes, jobs, money in exchange for sexual favors
- Show favoritism to any individual for sexual favors in return
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or vulnerable adults, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Be intoxicated under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst children or vulnerable adults are in my care.
- Engage with any person younger than 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts.
- Sleep in close proximity with children, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the supervisor is informed and if possible, ensure another adult is present.
- Use physical punishment on children/vulnerable adults.
- Promote any cultural practices that violate the protection rights of the child/vulnerable adult.

- Not hire children/vulnerable adults for domestic help ever or for other labor acts which are inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- *(In the case of education project)* Make private contact with students through social media or telephone calls or texting. Digital communications should be via the school e-mailing system.

Guidelines for Images and Media

I must:

- Obtain informed consent from the child/vulnerable adult and their parent/guardian before photographing or filming any child/ vulnerable adult (as a part of this, I must explain how the media will be used).
- Obtain written permission from HDCS for external media sharing.
- Respect local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming any children/vulnerable adult.
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- Not present children/vulnerable adults as victims but ensure their dignity.
- Ensure children and vulnerable adults are dressed appropriately and are not in sexually suggestive poses.
- Not use sensitive information about the child's/vulnerable adult's name or location.
- Use computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras, or social media appropriately and not to exploit or harass children/vulnerable adults.
- Not engage in social networking with students. If project activity is related, then only with consent and prior knowledge of their parent/guardian. *(In the case of education project)*
- Ensure that there are no names, locations or other identifying information used when publishing any form of communication about a child/vulnerable adult.
- Ensure that all images of children and vulnerable adults are stored safely and only accessible to those with permission to use them.

HDCS Personnel Attributes and Attitudes

HDCS believes that all staff are unique and are recruited on the basis on their capacity to meet the organizational values, goals, vision, and mission. Therefore:

I must:

- Treat all staff equally with dignity and respect, irrespective of project locations, positions, gender, case, and background.
- Respect all people including staff from diverse backgrounds (cultural, social, economic, religious, academic, and political etc.)
- Take initiative and encourage fellow peers and staff to learn and unlearn new ideas, knowledge, and skills.
- Practice humility: I will **do no harm** against another individual and in humility acknowledge any unknowingly or knowingly done wrongdoing.

I must not:

- Dominate, accuse, belittle or exercise my authority and position to do harm to any individual associated with HDCS.
- Act superior and behave inappropriately with any individuals associated with HDCS.
- Conduct any sexual, physical, or non-physical (mental) harm, abuse, exploitation to any staff or their family members.

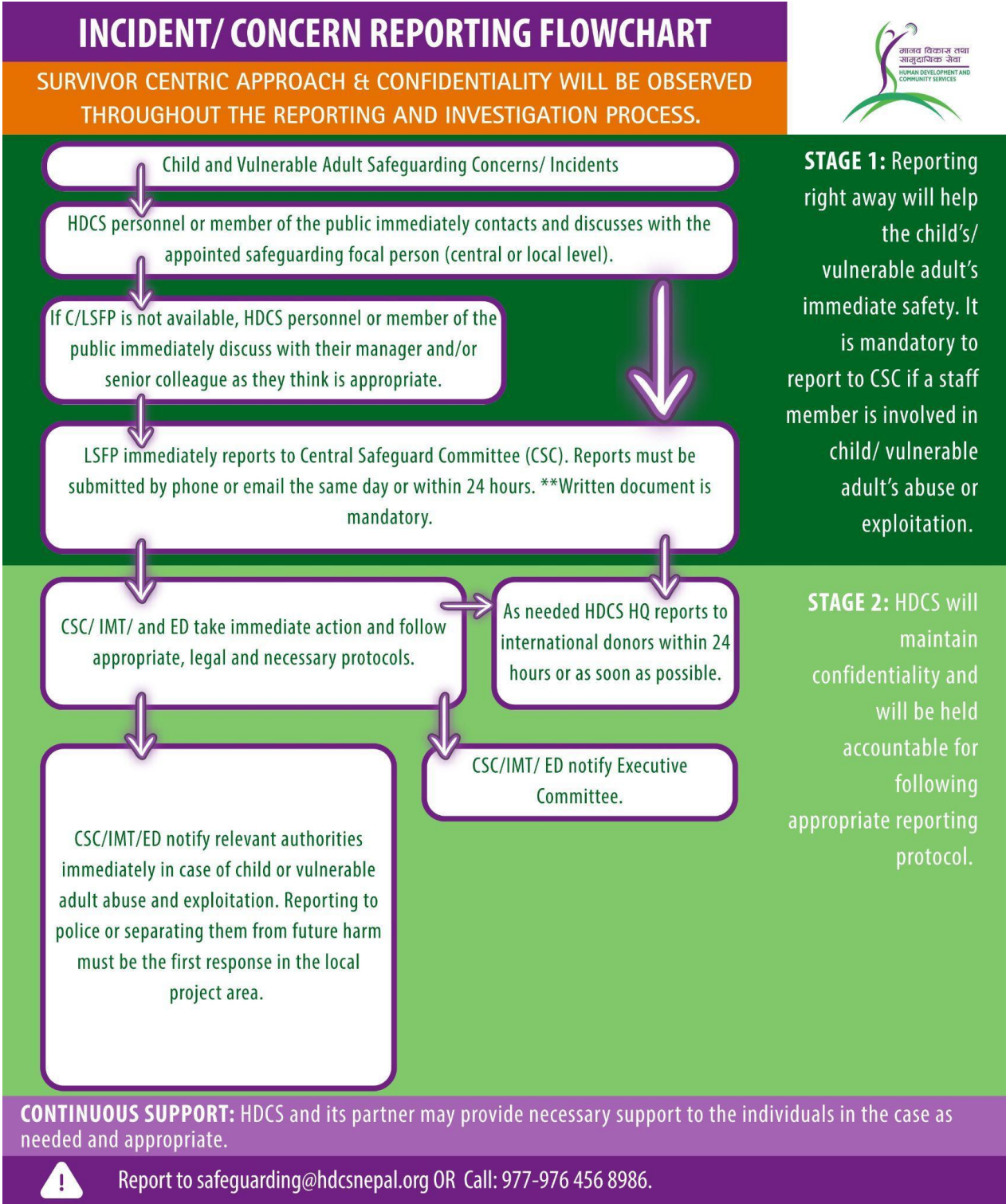
I understand that the responsibility is on me as a person associated with HDCS to use common sense, to act appropriately when children/vulnerable adults are present, and to avoid actions and behavior that could be construed as child/vulnerable adult exploitation or abuse.

By signing this Code of Conduct, I also attest that I have committed no offenses relating to children in any country (whether pending, proven, or undetected), and that I am a suitable person for a position which may include contact with children and vulnerable adult.

Signed _____ Date _____

Witness Signature _____ Date: _____

Appendix B – Reporting Flowchart



Appendix C – Incident Reporting Form – *KEEP HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL*****

Date of Report:Time:Location:

How was the information received? Please tick:

In-person

Letter

E-mail

Phone

1. Details of Child/Vulnerable Adult
Name: Age and Gender: Address: School (if relevant)/ Education level: Occupation: Any disability: Alias: Others (any):
2. Details of Person/s Reporting Concerns (if provided)
Name: Address: Cell no: Occupation: Relationship to Child/ Vulnerable Adult:
3. Details of Report
Details of alleged perpetrator: Age and Gender: Relationship to child/ vulnerable adult: Occupation:
Current situation of Child/Vulnerable Adult(s): Presenting problems: Safety: Physical health: Psychological: Social: Other:

Detail Description of concern, allegation or complaint:

Date:

Time:

Location of incident(s):

Incident that occurred:

Witness (if known):

Does the Child/Vulnerable Adult(s) know this concern is being raised?

Is alleged perpetrator HDCS personnel? Yes.....No.....

Any other details of concerns, allegations or incident(s) dates, times, who was present, who else knows, description of any observed injuries, parents' views, vulnerable adult's views, child's views if known.

4. Details of Parents/Guardians

Reporter discussed with parents/guardians yes/no

Parents/Guardians are aware that this concern is being reported to HDCS yes/no

***Note: When a minor is involved, and if the alleged perpetrator is not a parent or guardian, they must typically be notified before the child is interviewed. **DO NOT INFORM** in the case if the parent/ guardian is involved or the perpetrator.**

Parent/Guardian Info

Relationship to Child/Vulnerable Adult:

Name of Parent/Guardian:

Address:

Cell no:

5. Report recipient details:

Name:

Position:

Date:

Contact:

Signature:

***All information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Contact the Central or Local Safeguarding Focal Person to get advice and information on any unsure situation regarding the Child's/ Vulnerable Adult's safeguarding.

SAFEGUARDING COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESS

SURVIVOR CENTRIC APPROACH & CONFIDENTIALITY WILL BE OBSERVED THROUGHOUT THE REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION PROCESS.



1 Incident Reporting:

- Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Concerns/ Incidents are received by a staff at HDCS or member of the public immediately contacts and alerts the appointed Local Safeguarding Focal Person (LSFP).
- If LSFP is not available, contact a manager of senior staff as they think is appropriate.

2 Acknowledgement & Assessment

- HDCS staff member immediately reports to LSFP or a member of the Central Safeguard Committee (CSC). Reports must be submitted by phone or email the same day or within 24 hours. **Note:** Written documentation of the incident report is mandatory. Form available at www.hdcsnepal.org

3 Investigation and Actions:

- CSC/ IMT take necessary action as per the Initial Assessment and set up an investigation team and carrying out further appropriate actions.
- CSC/ IMT/ and ED take immediate action and follow appropriate, legal and necessary protocols. CSC/IMT/ ED notify Executive Committee. HDCS HQ reports to international donors within 24 hours or as soon as possible and as appropriate.
- CSC/IMT notify relevant authorities immediately in case of child or vulnerable adult abuse and exploitation. Reporting to police or separating them from future harm must be the first response in the local project area.

4 Closure

- Final report on the incident will be created by the assigned case managers and presented to CSC and IMT. Each case must be well documented with investigation process, evidences collected, and timelines. After appropriate outcomes and decisions, then case will be closed.

STAGE 1: Reporting right away will help the child's/ vulnerable adult's immediate safety. It is mandatory to report to CSC if a staff member is involved in child/ vulnerable adult's abuse or exploitation.

STAGE 2: HDCS will maintain confidentiality throughout investigation and closure processes and will be held accountable for following appropriate protocols.

CONTINUOUS SUPPORT: HDCS and its partner may provide necessary support to the individuals in the case as needed and appropriate.



Report to safeguarding@hdcsnepal.org OR Call: 977-976 456 8986.

Appendix E – Definitions of Terms

Beneficiaries: A person who derives advantage from something, especially in this case, who benefits from this policy: children, families, and local communities.

Central Safeguarding Committee (CSC): HDCS' Central Safeguarding Committee is responsible for overseeing safeguarding issues, safeguarding policy implementation and revision. CSC will also act as the response team for case and incident handling. The CSC holds a quarterly meeting and reports to the Executive Director who passes the report onto the Executive Committee.

Central Safeguarding Focal Person (CSFP): The person who has been given responsibility for receiving notices of abuse or potential abuse(s) of children to the next person of authority within the organization and other project locations.

Child: Any person under the age of 18 as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Code of Conduct (COC): A set of rules outlining the responsibilities of, or proper practices for, an individual, party or organization. Related concepts include ethical, honor and moral codes, as well as religious laws.

Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy (CVASP): A policy which an organization uses in order to mandate the protection of children and vulnerable adult from any abuses; done by default of a code of conduct agreed upon by personnel.

Child Neglect: Neglect and negligent treatment is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and which causes, or has a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible (WHO, 1999).

Emotional Abuse: includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can reach their full potential in the context of the society in which the child lives. There may also be acts toward the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, and ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment (WHO, 1999).

Executive Committee (EC): The Executive Committee plays a vital role in the development and success of the organization. The Executive Board holds the authority and responsibility to ensure the fulfilment of the organization's vision, mission, and project goals. The Executive board is headed by the Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary who also hold the decision-making power over the organization and its programs and projects.

Executive Director (ED): The Executive Director, appointed by the Executive committee oversees the daily operations and management of the organization and reports to the Executive Committee.

Exploitation: The use of the children and vulnerable adults for the benefit of the others. This includes labor, trafficking and exchange of sexual favors for goods, food and money through an abuse of power or trust.

Internal Management Team (IMT): HDCS's Internal Management Team (IMT) is responsible for overseeing day to day project management issues including serving in the capacity as the Safeguarding Committee in the case when there is no appointed members in the Central Safeguarding Committee (CSC). IMT holds monthly meeting and reports any incidents that need further investigation and reports to EC and partners. IMT is also responsible for making decisions and approvals for extending further support to an investigation or the any matters of safeguarding which further support the investigation and accountability process.

Local Safeguarding Focal Person (LSFP): The person who has been designated and given responsibility at project locations to handle reports received about issues or incidences of abuse, exploitation, neglect, and harassment.

Perpetrator: a person who carries out a harmful, illegal or immoral act. A person (or group of persons) who commits an act of sexual exploitation or offence.

Physical Abuse: the use of force which results in pain or injury or a change in a person's natural physical state or the non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, and burnings, poisoning and suffocating. It is the actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents (WHO, 1999).

Safeguarding: it is the set of internal facing, critical policies, procedures and practice that we employ to ensure that our organization itself is a child and vulnerable adult safe organization. This means we ensure that: anyone who represents our organization behaves appropriately towards children and vulnerable adults and never abuses the position of trust that comes with being a member of our organization family. Everyone associated with the organization is aware of and responds appropriately to issues of child/vulnerable adult abuse and the sexual exploitation of children/vulnerable adult. We create a child-safe and vulnerable adult safe environment in all our activities by always assessing and reducing potential risks to children and vulnerable adult and we are driven by the duty of care that we have to children and vulnerable adults.

Sexual Abuse: The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. It covers sexual offences including but not limited to: attempted rape, abusive sexual contact like unwanted touching, incest, behavioral sexual harassment and all forms of sexual activities (which includes attempts to force someone to perform oral sex) including pornography. All sexual activity with someone under the age of consent (18 years old in Nepal) is considered to be sexual abuse.

Sexual Exploitation: any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. It includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from sexual exploitation of another. Sexual harassment can take several forms. It can be obvious or indirect, physical or verbal, repeated or one off and perpetrated by any person of any gender towards any person of any gender. Sexual harassment can be perpetrated against beneficiaries, community members, citizens, as well as staff and personnel.

Sexual Harassment: A person sexually harasses another person if the person makes an unwelcome advance or an unwelcome request for sexual favors, or engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual

nature, in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Survivor: persons who experience any form of exploitation or abuse and whose claims have been substantiated through an administrative investigation process or by a governmental judicial process.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): is a human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children.

Vulnerable Adult: Vulnerable Adult is someone who is 18 years or over who may be in need of community care due to a mental health problem, learning disability, physical disability, age or illness. As a result, they may find it difficult to protect themselves from abuse, exploitation and harm.

Whistler-blower: the person who reveals or raises concerns over misconduct or malpractice (i.e. in specific to issues or concerns regarding abuse, exploitation, or harassment within the organization) about a person who is associated with HDCS in any capacity.

CONTACT:

E-mail: safeguarding@hdcsnepal.org; 977-976-456-8996

Safeguarding Leads according to projects:

RESOURCES:

HDCS CODE OF CONDUCT

HDCS believes that all children and vulnerable adults should be safe from harm and abuse. The main purpose of this Code of Conduct (COC) is to provide protection to children and vulnerable adults.



I MUST

- Be truthful in the recruitment process and on declaring previous criminal convictions when applying to work for HDCS.
- Comply with all relevant safeguarding international standards and all relevant Nepali legislation.
- Treat all children and adults with respect regardless of discriminatory factors such as gender, caste, religion or disability.
- Ensure whenever possible, that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children, also known as the "two-adult rule."
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child/vulnerable adult abuse, especially those committed by anyone associated with HDCS, in accordance with the Reporting Framework from the HDCS Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy. Failure to report any concerns of abuse constitutes a violation of the Code of Conduct.

I MUST NOT

- Physically assault or physically abuse children or vulnerable adults.
- Develop sexual relationships with children or vulnerable adults.
- Place myself in a position where I could be accused of sexually abusing a child or vulnerable adult.
- Use language or behavior towards children/adults that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally inappropriate.
- Behave in an inappropriate physical manner e.g. touching, viewing or holding private parts of children or vulnerable adults, fondle, hold, kiss, hug, or touch minors and vulnerable adults in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Offer benefits such as food, clothes, jobs, money in exchange for sexual favors
- Show favoritism to any individual for sexual favors in return
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or vulnerable adults, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Be intoxicated under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst children or vulnerable adults are in my care.
- Engage with any person younger than 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts.
- Sleep in close proximity with children, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the supervisor is informed and if possible, ensure another adult is present.
- Use physical punishment on children/vulnerable adults.
- Promote any cultural practices that violate the protection rights of the child/vulnerable adult.
- Not hire children/vulnerable adults for domestic help ever or for other labor acts which are inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- (In the case of education project) Make private contact with students through social media or telephone calls or texting. Digital communications should be via the school e-mailing system.

HDCS CODE OF CONDUCT



Guidelines for Images and Media

I MUST

- Obtain informed consent from the child/vulnerable adult and their parent/guardian before photographing or filming any child/vulnerable adult (as a part of this, I must explain how the media will be used).
- Obtain written permission from HDCS for external media sharing.
- Respect local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming any children/vulnerable adult.
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- Not present children/vulnerable adults as victims but ensure their dignity.
- Ensure children and vulnerable adults are dressed appropriately and are not in sexually suggestive poses.
- Not use sensitive information about the child's/vulnerable adult's name or location.
- Use computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras, or social media appropriately and not to exploit or harass children/vulnerable adults.
- Not engage in social networking with students. If project activity related, then only with consent and prior knowledge of their parent/guardian. (In the case of education project)
- Ensure that there are no names, locations or other identifying information used when publishing any form of communication about a child/vulnerable adult.
- Ensure that all images of children and vulnerable adults are stored safely and only accessible to those with permission to use them.

HDCS Personnel Attributes and Attitudes

HDCS believes that all staff are unique and are recruited on the basis on their capacity to meet the organizational values, goals, vision, and mission. Therefore:

I MUST

- Treat all staff equally with dignity and respect, irrespective of project locations, positions, gender, case, and background.
- Respect all people including staff from diverse backgrounds (cultural, social, economic, religious, academic, and political etc.)
- Take initiative and encourage fellow peers and staff to learn and unlearn new ideas, knowledge, and skills.
- Practice humility: I will do no harm against another individual and in humility acknowledge any unknowingly or knowingly done wrongdoing.

I MUST NOT

- Dominate, accuse, belittle or exercise my authority and position to do harm to any individual associated with HDCS.
- Act superior and behave inappropriately with any individuals associated with HDCS.
- Conduct any sexual, physical, or non-physical (mental) harm, abuse, exploitation to any staff or their family members.
- I understand that the responsibility is on me as a person associated with HDCS to use common sense, to act appropriately when children/vulnerable adults are present, and to avoid actions and behavior that could be construed as child/vulnerable adult exploitation or abuse.