

## Safeguarding Policy including Children and Adults

### 1. Policy statement

**International Alert is committed to zero tolerance of any forms of harm**, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and will make every endeavour to prevent and respond appropriately.

International Alert (Alert) is an international non-governmental organisation registered and based in the UK, with country offices across the globe, empowering vulnerable communities and promoting conflict resolution in fragile and hostile environments.

### 2. What is safeguarding?

Alert recognises that its staff, associated personnel, partners and suppliers have power and hold positions of trust in the communities who benefit from our activities, and that misuse of that power can lead to different forms of harm, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Alert has a duty of care to prevent, report and respond to all forms of harm that may occur to all persons who come into direct or indirect contact with the organisation. This duty is exercised to safeguard the wellbeing and welfare of persons, including children and vulnerable adults.

- A 'child' is any person under the age of 18 in keeping with the definition under the almost universally ratified UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), regardless of definitions that may be used in local law or custom.
- A 'vulnerable adult' is any individual aged 18 years and over who is at greater risk of harm due to factors such as their gender, age, mental or physical health, sexuality or disability, or who has been made vulnerable due to poverty, power differential, inequality, displacement due to war or disaster, or a combination of two or more factors.

### 3. Who does this policy apply to?

This policy is binding on the following persons within and outside working hours:

- Staff (paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time)
- Associated personnel (trustees, interns, volunteers, consultants)
- Partners and suppliers (partner organisations and their employees and suppliers)

Alert expects all staff, associated personnel and partners to uphold the highest standards of behaviour and conduct when having contact with children, vulnerable adults and with each other, by proactively safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all who come into contact with Alert, within and outside working hours.

This policy forms part of the contractual terms of engagement for all UK and non-UK based staff, associated personnel and partners. In the event of any discrepancy between this policy and associated policies with local laws, the higher standard will apply.

**It is a mandatory duty for staff, associated personnel and partners to report any breaches to this or any other policy within 24 hours.** Safeguarding is a key governance priority for Alert's trustees.

## 4. Policy aims

The aims of this policy and accompanying procedures are to:

- ensure Alert provides a safe and trusted environment which safeguards anyone with whom Alert has contact.
- ensure that safeguarding policies, procedures and measures are understood by all staff, associated personnel, partners and suppliers.
- promote an organisational culture that prioritises safeguarding and makes it safe for those affected (directly or indirectly) to report incidents and concerns with the assurance that they will be handled sensitively and properly.
- provide clarity on how incidents and allegations will be handled, should they arise; and
- reflect our obligations to our beneficiaries and survivors of safeguarding concerns, donors and the UK regulator, and local laws of the countries in which we work.

## 5. Alert's values and principles

This policy is based on the following organisational values found in Alert's Ethical Framework: Values and Principles (progress, fairness, respect, inclusion, openness):

- We have a duty of care to those with whom we work and with whom our representatives' work.
- We monitor the consequences of our actions and discontinue or change any that are not contributing to peace.
- We avoid increasing people's risk of harm by our actions, though we respect the choices they make themselves.
- We are aware of the possibility of abuse of the power that unequal relationships at times confer on us and take reasonable measures to prevent harm.
- We recognise that every human has equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation and that the welfare of vulnerable persons should particularly be safeguarded and promoted.
- We have a responsibility to ensure partners and contractors with whom we work meet minimum standards of safeguarding in their work and to support them to achieve this.
- We have a duty to report any actual or suspected safeguarding concerns where harm has or may have occurred, using Alert's reporting system.
- We will take all suspicions and allegations of abuse seriously and respond swiftly and appropriately.

## 6. Safeguarding standards

This policy is underpinned by international safeguarding standards, donor requirements and international law, including:

- UNSG's Bulletin on the Elimination of SEA (2003)
- IASC PSEA Task Force 6 Core Principles (amended in 2019)
- Core Humanitarian Standard
- FCDO Due Diligence Safeguarding Standards, OECD DAC requirements for Ending SEA, UNICEF PSEA Toolkit
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (2006)
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

## 7. Prohibited behaviour

Staff, associated personnel, partners and suppliers are prohibited from:

- engaging in sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18), regardless of the

age of majority or age of consent locally – mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.

- exchanging money, employment, goods or services for sex, sexual acts or favours.
- engaging in any form of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour toward children, women and vulnerable adults.
- using their power or position to withhold assistance or services, or to give preferential treatment.
- engaging with traditional harmful practices that harm children and vulnerable adults, such as early or forced marriage, honour killing, femicide, female genital cutting or mutilation, and other forms of sexual or gender-based violence.
- using language or behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- using any social media and devices to exploit, abuse or harass children and vulnerable adults.
- using corporal punishment, physical punishment or discipline of children and vulnerable adults.
- showing favouritism by providing gifts or cash (often known as ‘sexual grooming’) or doing things for child of a personal nature that they are able to do for themselves.
- hiring children under the age of 18 for domestic or other labour, or otherwise engaging children in activities that are inappropriate to their age or development, which interferes with their education and recreational activities and may cause harm.

## 8. Implementation

This policy is accompanied by Safeguarding Procedures setting out how this policy should be implemented, which includes undertaking the following measures.

### Prevention

- Alert will undertake risk assessments prior to implementing all projects, activities, programmes, recruitments and investigations.
- Alert will ensure that it undertakes safe recruitment and selection of staff and associated personnel.
- Alert will undertake appropriate due diligence processes prior to contracting or partnering with any other person or organisation, to try to ensure prior incidents of misconduct are discovered.
- Alert will ensure that staff, associated personnel, partners and suppliers sign this and related policies such as the Code of Conduct to demonstrate their commitment to them and their understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- Alert will ensure that staff, associated personnel, partners and suppliers attend and/or have access to mandatory induction training and regular refresher training on safeguarding.
- Alert will ensure that there will be safe use of personal images and data of children and vulnerable adults.

### Reporting

- Alert staff and associated personnel must report all safeguarding concerns to the Safeguarding Officer, the Director of Global Delivery, on [concerns@international-alert.org](mailto:concerns@international-alert.org) and/or in-country Safeguarding Focal Points if in the country offices.
- The Safeguarding Officer will convene an internal case meeting with persons who need to know, to make decisions as to the next steps.
- The Safeguarding Officer will liaise with the Executive Director and the Designated Safeguarding Board Members to decide the next steps for safeguarding concerns of a serious nature.

## **Response**

- Alert will deliver mandatory safeguarding training during the induction of staff, associated personnel, partners and suppliers, as well as a regular refresher training.
- Alert will ensure investigations take place for concerns raised that warrant them, based on confidential and survivor-centred approaches.

## **Monitoring and learning**

- Alert will continually monitor the effectiveness of this and other aligned policies against targets set.
- Alert will hold a learning review after managing safeguarding concerns to ensure that lessons learnt are captured and included back in policies, procedures and practice.

## **9. Safeguarding responsibility**

Promoting, implementing, and upholding the commitments of this policy, associated policies and the Safeguarding Code of Conduct is a key responsibility of all staff, associated personnel and partners, particularly managers. More particularly:

- Alert's Board of Trustees, assisted by the Safeguarding Officer, Executive Director and Designated Safeguarding Board Members, have overall responsibility for monitoring the outcomes of this policy and ensuring that Alert effectively undertakes its duty of care, including by:
  - setting an organisational safeguarding culture together with all managers in the organisation;
  - ensuring safeguarding is a regular agenda item at Board meetings as part of good governance and oversight;
  - ensuring safeguarding is included in the organisational Risk Register, has a clear risk owner, and is regularly reviewed at the Board and Executive level
  - ensuring the Strategy, Risk and Audit Committee provides more regular oversight of managing safeguarding risks in the organisation.
- Alert's Safeguarding Officer, with authority from the Board and Executive team, is the point of contact for all safeguarding concerns that may arise and reported and will be responsible for ensuring that clear processes are in place for next steps.
- Alert's Safeguarding Focal Points will be trained and supported to carry out their role in project sites or in-country.
- Alert staff, particularly managers, must promote an accountable and safe organisational culture, including promoting this policy and the Safeguarding Code of Conduct.
- All Alert staff, associated personnel, partners and suppliers must cooperate with any enquiries or investigations into safeguarding and related concerns.

## **10. Accountability and Review**

Anyone bound by this policy and associated policies will face one or more of the following if found to be in breach of the agreed standards:

- For staff: Suspension pending investigations; disciplinary action up to and including dismissal; possible referral to national and/or international authorities.
- For Board members and volunteers: Termination of engagement; possible referral to national and/or international authorities.
- For consultants/contractors: Disciplinary action up to and including termination of contract; possible referral to national and/or international authorities.
- For partners and suppliers: Possible suspension/withdrawal of funding/support and ending the relationship; possible referral to national and/or international authorities.

This policy is effective from June 2023. It will be reviewed every two years to ensure it is updated in keeping with international and donor requirements and safeguarding good practice.