



Bahini Educare Foundation

Child Protection Policy: 2081

PREAMBLE

Established in 2014, Bahini Educare Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the rights of children, providing educational support, and advocating for women's health and empowerment. "Bahini" translates to "girls," reflecting our focus on the protection of girls, while "Educare" embodies education, healthcare, nutrition, clothing, hygiene, counselling, and protection services. While our primary focus is on girls, we also extend support to boys as and when necessary. Our innovative and all-encompassing program is based on the provision of basic needs, education, vocational training, communication, and social mobilization to prevent human trafficking and all forms of exploitation.

Bahini Educare Foundation is deeply committed to protecting the safety and security of vulnerable children in Nepal. We uphold the principles and obligations outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC) and the Children's Act, 2075 (2018). The CRC states that '**All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation**'.

Our organization condemns all forms of child abuse and exploitation and takes prompt action to address any reported incidents, both within and outside the organization. Through risk management strategies, we strive to create safe environments for all children associated with our programs, ensuring they experience zero harm.

SCOPE OF POLICY:

This policy applies to all individuals associated with Bahini Educare Foundation, including general members, part-time and full-time staff, resource persons, volunteers, interns, and partner organizations. Collectively referred to as "Members," these individuals are expected to adhere to the guidelines outlined herein.

DEFINITIONS:

Child: As per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as a human being below the age of 18 years.

Child Protection: Child protection embodies safeguarding children from various forms of harm, including physical and psychological abuse, exploitation through child labor, bullying, sexual abuse, discrimination, and harassment, all of which detrimentally affect their development and dignity.

Child Abuse: This includes any form of maltreatment or exploitation of children, such as physical or mental violence, neglect, child labour, and sexual or commercial abuse/exploitation by parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other individual.

BAHINI EDUCARE FOUNDATION'S COMMITMENT:

Realizing that any form of child abuse or possession of or access to materials abusive to children or deliberate efforts to create such environment should be outright intolerable, that the degree of child abuse/exploitation varies and some children are at high risk of being abused and exploited:

Bahini Educare Foundation pledges to:

- Raise awareness among Members and stakeholders regarding child abuse and exploitation.
- Provide orientation and guidance on appropriate responses to incidents of abuse or exploitation.
- Refrain from engaging and/or employing individuals or organizations that pose a risk to children during program interventions.
- In working with a Consortium member lacking its own Child Protection policy, the member will have to adopt our policy, based on contractual obligations.

GOAL:

Our goal is to protect children from all forms of abuse and exploitation during organizational operations and program interventions.

OBJECTIVES:

Establish organizational directives for child protection.

Foster fair practices among Members concerning the protection of children.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED OR ACTUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN:

In principle, all members, including consortium partners should report the incidents of actual child abuse/exploitation they witness or are reported to them. It should be ensured however that no personal biases are reflected in doing so and the Child Protection code of the organization is upheld. Responsibly reported allegations should be officially acknowledged and be internalized. Until the investigation is not accomplished, reported concerns are simply allegations.

Procedurally, members should inform and discuss the perceived or apparent concerns with the immediate senior position holders of the organizational staff structure however if one feels uneasy to do so due to positional hierarchy, the matter should be informed to the Director of the organization who in return should deal the matter with high confidentiality and reach prudent and just decision in coordination with oversight committee against those involved in breaching the code of conduct. In case of allegations reported against the Director or members, the Executive Committee or the Committee members authorized by the Executive Committee should look into the matter.

All concerns, disclosures or allegations can be submitted in writing, verbally or through any electronic medium. Also, allegations and reports exposed via media about the Members should also fall under the scope of this Policy.

In discussing the reported allegation of breach of this code of conduct, discussions should be objectively oriented at:

- whether or not this Child Protection Policy has been breached

- the action against the breaker of this policy
- possible risks to the child and degree of risk
- steps towards mitigating such risks
- the immediate actions of the organization vis-a-vis the child's safety should be considered

ADDRESSING REPORTED CONCERNS:

- Upon information of any case(s) the director or individuals authorized by the board should immediately call for a meeting.
- If the director or any person of higher authority has been alleged, the executive board or the committee authorized by the executive committee should look into the matter.
- Any individual identified or suspected of child abuse during the recruitment process will be disqualified.
- Bahini Educare Foundation adopts a zero-tolerance approach towards abusers/exploiters with due consideration of the national legislations and related organizational policies on abuse/exploitation, prioritizing the safety and welfare of the child.
- The organization will adhere to Rule 2.9 of its Administrative Policy when addressing reported concerns.

GENERAL COMPLIANCE:

Bahini Educare Foundation is committed to:

- Orienting staff and partner organizations on the Child Protection Policy.
- Providing copies of the policy to newly recruited staff.
- Training staff working directly with children on the provisions of the policy.
- Briefing Consortium partners on the policy and making sure this is followed.
- Uploading the policy on its website and integrating it into organizational statutes and policies.
- Periodically revising the policy to align with legal changes and providing corresponding training.

CODE OF CONDUCT:

In alignment with our objectives and ethical conduct, all members (General & Executive) of Bahini Educare Foundation, staff, interns, volunteers, and partner organizations are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

DO'S:

- Familiarize yourself with the organization's code of conduct regarding child protection.
- Treat all children with respect, regardless of their race, color, sex, language, religion, political beliefs, ethnicity, disability or any other characteristics.
- Understand the procedures for reporting concerns or incidents and be aware of the designated contacts for such matters.
- As far as possible, ensure that another adult is present when working with or in proximity to children.
- Promptly report any behavior by a member that physically or emotionally harms a child.
- Immediately report any behavior that is sexually inappropriate, provocative or exploitative towards children in any form.
- Report if aware of any instances of hiring children for labor that is inappropriate for their age or development and that interferes with their education or places them at risk of injury.
- Obtain verbal or written consent from all beneficiaries and parents or legal guardians before documenting photos or videos of children, explaining how the images/videos will be used.
- Respect the beneficiaries' wishes if they do not wish to have their photo taken or shared publicly.
- Protect the privacy of children by avoiding the public disclosure of their full identities, contact information, or exact locations unless it is in their best interest.
- Present children in photographs and videos in a dignified, appropriate, and respectful manner.
- Prioritize the well-being of children in all organizational programs and interventions, including legal assistance and prosecution of child abusers / exploiters.

2. DONT'S:

- Avoid using inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, or culturally insensitive language when interacting with children.
- Refrain from using corporal punishment or discipline on children.
- Do not spend time alone with children away from others or take a child away from project sites alone unless another staff member is aware, and a door is left open if privacy is necessary.
- Never engage in any form of sexual activity or exploitation involving children.
- Avoid hiring children for labor that interferes with their education, recreation, or places them at risk of harm.
- Do not invite children into your home without parental/guardian permission unless they are in immediate risk or physical danger.
- Do not exploit, harass, or access child pornography through any medium.
- Avoid initiating or participating in sexually suggestive conversations with children.
- Refrain from any physically inappropriate behavior (like fondle, hug, kiss or touch in a culturally insensitive way) or any action that may be construed as sexual.
- Do not engage in any behavior that aims to shame, humiliate, belittle, degrade children or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Avoid any activities or behaviors that violate child rights or prevalent national & international legal instruments for child protection.

Any Member attracted by this Policy should realize that the above-mentioned do's and don'ts are not exhaustive, rather upholding and behaving accordingly for the best interest of the child is of paramount importance when it comes to a child protection.

By adhering to these guidelines, we uphold our commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment for all children associated with Bahini Educare Foundation.