

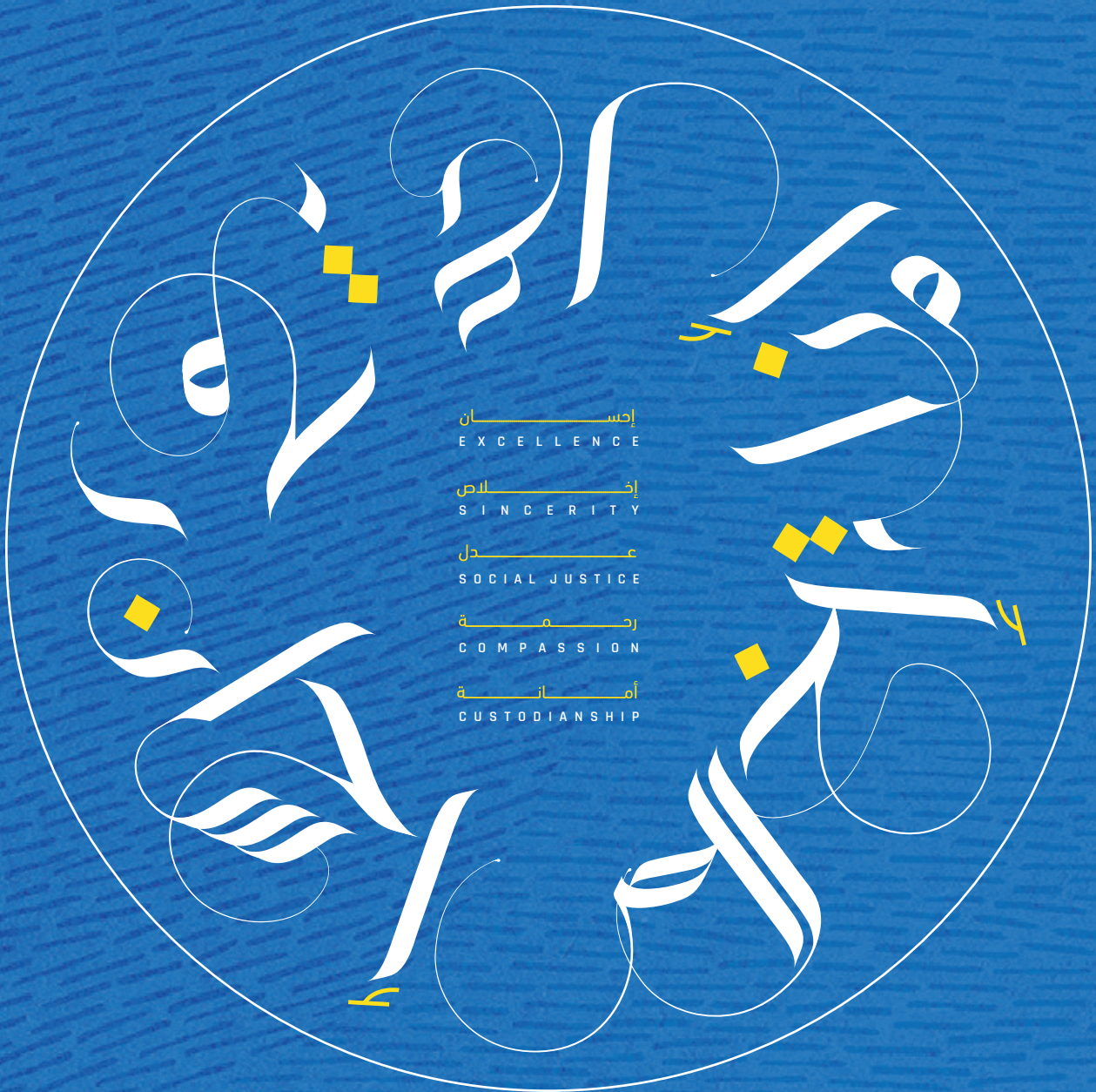


Islamic Relief Worldwide

Safeguarding Policy

*In the name of Allah,
most Gracious, most Merciful*

OUR VALUES



Version management

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Definitions

To ensure clarity and consistency in safeguarding practices, the following definitions for key terms used in this policy are:

- **Associate of Islamic Relief** - Refers to any individual acting on behalf of the organisation in any capacity. This includes, but is not limited to, staff members (permanent, temporary, and contracted employees), volunteers and interns, trustees and board members, consultants and independent contractors, partners, suppliers, ambassadors, and service providers engaged in Islamic Relief activities, or any individual acting in an official capacity for or on behalf of Islamic Relief, whether paid or unpaid.
- **At-risk adults (vulnerable adults)** - Individuals who, due to age, disability, illness, trauma, or socioeconomic status, may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.
- **Bullying** - Any deliberate act of intimidation, humiliation, or coercion towards individuals, including verbal threats, social exclusion, cyberbullying, or manipulation that causes distress or harm.
- **(Charity) Ambassador** - an individual such as a volunteer, donor, or public figure—who actively represents, supports, or endorses Islamic Relief. By promoting the charity’s mission and activities, these ambassadors play a crucial role in raising awareness and generating funds to advance its objectives.
- **Child abuse and neglect** - Any maltreatment, action or inaction that causes harm to a child.
- **Child exploitation** - The use of a child for someone else’s gain or advantage, including child labour, trafficking, or forced marriage.
- **Child labour** - The use of children for work that is harmful or interferes with their education, or is mentally, physically, socially and/or morally harmful.
- **Children** - Any individual under the age of 18, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- **Complaint** - A formal or informal expression of concern, dissatisfaction, or allegation regarding misconduct, safeguarding violations, abuse, exploitation, harassment, or any breach of organisational ethical and Code of Conduct policies. Complaints can be raised by staff, volunteers, rightsholders, partners, or external stakeholders and can relate to individual behaviour, programme implementation, or organisational practice.
- **Confidentiality** - The principle of restricting access to sensitive information to protect the privacy/identities of survivors, witnesses, and those involved in safeguarding concerns.
- **Cyberbullying** - A form of bullying or harassment using electronic means to include posting rumours, threats, sexual remarks, comments on a victim’s personal behaviour or pejorative labels (i.e. hate speech).
- **Displaced communities** - Refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers and stateless individuals who often face heightened risks of trafficking, exploitation, and abuse due to lack of legal protection and social instability.
- **Do No Harm** - A principle that requires organisations to avoid actions that cause any harm to individuals or communities they serve. It applies to programme design, decision-making, and operational activities.
- **Duty of Care** - The legal and ethical obligation of an organisation to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and protection of its staff and individuals affected by its work.
- **Grooming** - A process through which an individual builds trust with a child or vulnerable adult to exploit them sexually, financially, or in other harmful ways.
- **Harassment** - Persistent and unwanted behaviour, including verbal abuse, intimidation, inappropriate remarks, or intrusive questioning, which violates the dignity and wellbeing of a person.
- **Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS)** - An inter-agency initiative to prevent individuals with a history of sexual misconduct from moving between organisations undetected.
- **Modern slavery** - Situations where individuals are exploited and cannot refuse or leave due to threats, violence, coercion, deception, or abuse of power. This may include various forms of exploitation, such as human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, and servitude.
- **Neglect** - The failure to provide basic care, assistance, or protection, particularly for children, at-risk adults, or individuals dependent on others.

- **Partner** – Any organisation, institution, or entity that collaborates with Islamic Relief to deliver programmes, projects, or services.
- **Protection** – The broader effort to respond to and address harm when it occurs, ensuring individuals experiencing or at risk of violence, abuse, or exploitation receive legal, social, and humanitarian support.
- **PSEAH** – Prevention of Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment
- **Psychological or emotional abuse** – Acts that cause emotional distress, fear, or mental harm, including threats, intimidation, humiliation, or coercive control.
- **Safeguarding** – The responsibility of an organisation to ensure its staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to people, especially children, at-risk adults, vulnerable communities, and staff. It includes preventing abuse, exploitation, and harm and ensuring that appropriate action is taken when concerns arise.
- **Safeguarding concern** - Any information, observation, or allegation that suggests a person may have experienced, is experiencing, or could be at risk of harm, abuse, exploitation, or neglect.
- **Safeguarding Focal Point** – A designated staff member responsible for receiving safeguarding concerns, providing guidance, and ensuring safeguarding compliance within an organisation.
- **SEAH** – Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
- **Serious incident** - An adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in, or risks, a significant loss of charity money or assets, damage to charity property, or harm to the work of the charity, its beneficiaries or reputation¹
- **Sexual abuse** – The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
- **Sexual exploitation** – The actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes—including profiting monetarily, socially, or politically—from another person.
- **Sexual harassment** – A range of unacceptable and unwelcome behaviours and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to, sexual suggestions or demands, requests for ‘sexual favours’, sexual, verbal, or physical conduct, or gestures that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating. Harassment is assessed by its impact on the recipient, not the intent of the perpetrator.
- **Staff** - Individuals working for an organisation, including employees, casual workers, volunteers, and secondees.
- **Survivor** – An individual who has experienced harm, abuse, exploitation, or misconduct, such as sexual abuse, physical violence, psychological harm, neglect, or discrimination. The term emphasises the strength and resilience of the individual rather than defining them by their victimhood.
- **Survivor-centred approach** – A framework that prioritises the rights, dignity, safety, and wellbeing of survivors of harm, abuse, exploitation, or misconduct when responding to safeguarding incidents.
- **Trafficking** – The recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring or receiving of people for the purpose of exploitation or for forced labour, abuse, or other purposes.
- **Volunteer** – In the context of this policy refers to any individual who freely offers their time, skills, or services to support Islamic Relief’s work without financial compensation. Such volunteers will be considered associates of Islamic Relief.
- **Vulnerable communities** - Groups of people who are at heightened risk of harm, exploitation, or marginalisation due to numerous factors such as socioeconomic status, health conditions, age, gender, disability, displacement, and exposure to conflict or environmental disasters.
- **Whistleblowing** – The process of reporting wrongdoing, misconduct, or safeguarding concerns within an organisation. Whistleblowers must be protected from retaliation, and have their privacy protected.
- **Zero-tolerance approach** – A strict attitude stating that any form of abuse, exploitation, or harassment will not be tolerated. Violations will result in immediate disciplinary action, including dismissal and legal referral.

¹ The Government of the United Kingdom. (2019) Guidance: How to report a serious incident in your charity. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity> (Accessed: 23/09/25).

1. Introduction

This Safeguarding Policy outlines Islamic Relief's commitment to preventing and responding to all forms of harm, abuse, exploitation, and misconduct across its operations, programmes, and partnerships. Safeguarding is a core duty of care and applies to all associates of the organisation, ensuring accountability at every level.

The policy integrates key safeguarding areas:

- General safeguarding – Protection of all individuals, particularly at-risk individuals, from harm, neglect, exploitation, and abuse.
- Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse & Harassment (PSEAH) – A zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct, with a survivor-centred response and accountability measures.
- Child safeguarding – Upholding the rights and protection of children in line with international child protection standards.

Aligned with global safeguarding frameworks, this policy applies to all Islamic Relief associates, including staff, trustees, volunteers, partners, suppliers, contractors, and anyone acting on behalf of the organisation.

Safeguarding is not just about responding to incidents—it is about actively preventing harm, promoting accountability, and fostering a culture where every individual is treated with dignity and respect. This policy sets out Islamic Relief's principles, responsibilities, prevention measures, reporting mechanisms, and response procedures to ensure safeguarding remains central to all its activities.

1.1 Safeguarding as part of Islamic Relief's Duty of Care commitment

Islamic Relief recognises safeguarding as a fundamental part of its Duty of Care, ensuring the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of rightsholders, staff, volunteers, partners, and community members. The organisation is legally, ethically, and morally responsible for preventing harm and creating a safe and respectful environment in all its programmes, operations, and workplaces.

Safeguarding is integrated across all organisational policies and practices, alongside:

- Code of Conduct – Establishing ethical and professional behaviour expectations.
- Dignity at Work – Promoting a workplace free from

harassment, discrimination, and bullying.

- Do No Harm – Ensuring programmes and interventions do not cause any harm.
- Complaints and Whistleblowing Mechanisms – Providing safe, confidential reporting channels with protections against retaliation.

1.2 Islamic basis for safeguarding

Islamic Relief's safeguarding commitment is deeply rooted in Islamic values of justice, dignity, and protection for the most vulnerable. Islam emphasises the sanctity of human life and the duty to prevent harm, aligning with global safeguarding principles.

Key Islamic principles that guide our safeguarding approach include:

- Protection of human dignity – The Qur'an states, "We have certainly honoured the children of Adam..." (Qur'an 17:70), affirming that every individual deserves respect, protection, and care.
- Duty of Care and accountability – Safeguarding is a trust (amanah), and those in positions of authority are accountable for the wellbeing of those under their care, as stated in the hadith: "Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock."
- Preventing harm – A core Islamic principle states that harm should neither be inflicted nor tolerated, reinforcing the obligation to protect individuals from abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
- Justice and protection for the vulnerable – Islam mandates the protection of children, orphans, women, and the oppressed, as reflected in the Qur'an: "And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best..." (Qur'an 6:152).
- Speaking out against injustice – Islam encourages reporting and addressing wrongdoing, supporting a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and exploitation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said to his companions "Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or he is oppressed." A companion asked, "O Messenger of God! I can help him if he is oppressed, but

how can I help him if he is an oppressor?" He replied, "By preventing him from oppressing others." This hadith underscores the duty to stop harm and protect vulnerable individuals.

- Commitment to excellence (ihsan) - Staff must perform their duties to the best of their abilities, embodying the principle of ihsan, approaching all tasks with dedication, honesty, and a commitment to excellence, while ensuring responsibilities are fulfilled to the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct.

By embedding these Islamic values into our safeguarding policies and practices, Islamic Relief ensures that faith and ethics drive our commitment to protecting the dignity, safety, and rights of all individuals.

1.3 Policy statement

Islamic Relief is committed to ensuring that all individuals—staff, children, at-risk adults, and vulnerable communities—are safeguarded from harm, abuse, exploitation, and neglect in all aspects of its work.

Guided by the principles of dignity, social justice, and accountability, the organisation upholds a zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse, misconduct, or exploitation within its operations, programmes, and partnerships.

Key commitments include:

- Embedding safeguarding into all activities, ensuring programmes do no harm and proactively protect individuals from risk.
- Maintaining a zero-tolerance stance towards all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment by staff, volunteers, trustees, partners, and other representatives.
- Protecting children and ensuring their safety, dignity, and participation in decisions affecting their wellbeing.
- Ensuring safeguarding measures are inclusive, protecting all individuals regardless of background, ability, or status.
- Providing safe and confidential reporting mechanisms for rightsholders, staff, and stakeholders, ensuring no retaliation against whistleblowers.
- Establishing and maintaining clear referral pathways to ensure survivors of SEAH receive timely and appropriate support.
- Responding swiftly to concerns, ensuring survivor-centred support, including medical, psychosocial, and legal assistance.

- Conducting regular safeguarding audits, risk assessments, and policy reviews to strengthen practices and address emerging risks.

Islamic Relief is committed to upholding the following principles in all aspects of its safeguarding work:

- **Empowerment:** People are supported to make their own choices and give informed consent. Safeguarding processes respect individual autonomy and dignity.
- **Protection:** The organisation actively identifies and safeguards individuals and groups who may be vulnerable to harm, ensuring their safety and wellbeing are prioritised.
- **Prevention:** Proactive steps are taken to reduce risks and stop harm before it occurs, embedding safeguarding into policies, programmes, and daily practice.
- **Proportionality:** Responses to safeguarding concerns are appropriate and proportionate to the level of risk. Interventions are measured, effective, and avoid unnecessary intrusion.
- **Partnership:** Safeguarding is most effective when delivered in collaboration. The organisation works with communities, local services, and partners to develop context-appropriate solutions.
- **Accountability:** Every individual and the organisation as a whole share responsibility for safeguarding. Clear roles and responsibilities are essential to prevent negligence and strengthen trust.

Our safeguarding approach is aligned with international sector standards and legal frameworks including:

- UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, (ST/SGB/2003/13).
- IASC Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA.
- Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- Keeping Children Safe Standards (KCS).
- FCDO (UK) Enhanced Safeguarding Standards.
- ECHO (EU Humanitarian Aid) Safeguarding & PSEA Commitments.
- A Common Approach to Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (CAPSEAH).

1.4 Rationale for the policy

Islamic Relief is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and protective environment for all individuals, particularly children and at-risk adults. This policy sets out the standards, responsibilities, and procedures for preventing, identifying, and responding to safeguarding concerns across all operations, programmes, and partnerships.

Objectives of this policy:

- Ensure the safety and dignity of all Islamic Relief staff, volunteers, children, young people, and at-risk people affected by Islamic Relief's work.
- Set clear expectations and responsibilities for staff, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and partners.
- Align with international safeguarding standards and legal requirements.
- Establish confidential, survivor-centred reporting and response mechanisms.
- Foster a culture of safeguarding, embedding best practices in recruitment, training, programme design, and risk management.

1.5 Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all individuals associated with Islamic Relief, including:

- Staff, trustees, volunteers, consultants, contractors, third-party service providers, ambassadors, patrons, and partner organisations in all locations – regardless of whether they engage with the organisation during or outside of working hours.
- Rightsholders, community members, whistleblowers, and witnesses engaging with Islamic Relief's work.
- Third-party organisations working with or on behalf of Islamic Relief, who are required to comply with this policy as a condition of partnership.

While this is a global, organisation-wide policy, adaptations may be required for compliance with country-specific laws. However, where Islamic Relief's standards exceed local legal requirements, the higher standard must be followed.

This policy does not cover workplace grievances, bullying, or harassment, as these fall under the Dignity at Work Policy, managed by HR.

Although closely related, safeguarding and protection have distinct meanings:

- **Safeguarding** – Preventative measures to ensure Islamic Relief's staff, operations, and programmes do no harm. Safeguarding focuses on preventing abuse, neglect, exploitation, and misconduct within the organisation.
- **Protection** – Broader efforts to respond to and address harm when it occurs, particularly in conflict, disaster, or displacement settings. Protection applies to wider society beyond Islamic Relief's work.

1.6 Roles and responsibilities

Safeguarding is a **shared responsibility** that requires commitment and accountability at all levels of Islamic Relief. Every individual—staff, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and partners—has a duty to uphold safeguarding principles and take action to prevent and respond to harm, abuse, and exploitation. In relation to this policy the:

- **Board of Trustees:** Holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring our rightsholders and staff are not intentionally or unintentionally harmed through our actions. Its role is to ensure that safeguarding is a strategic priority, and that appropriate policies, resources, and governance structures are in place. Trustees have a legal duty to ensure the organisation takes all reasonable action within its power to ensure this does not happen. There is a designated trustee to oversee Safeguarding.
- **Board of Directors:** Responsible for ensuring safeguarding policies and strategies are operationalised across Islamic Relief's global programmes and offices, through robust safeguarding systems and mechanisms, integrating safeguarding into programmes, HR, and operations, supporting the Safeguarding teams as and when required.
- **Safeguarding Oversight Committee:** Provides strategic guidance, oversight, and policy direction, ensuring safeguarding is embedded, risks are addressed, and accountability is maintained.
- **Head of Safeguarding:** Responsible for the development, monitoring, and periodic review of this policy. Along with the Safeguarding team, they ensure effective implementation and compliance.

- **Country Directors:** Embed safeguarding into programmes and operations, conduct risk assessments, ensure staff training, and collaborate with local authorities for survivor support.
- **Senior Management Teams (Country Office level and at Islamic Relief Worldwide):** The Senior Management Teams are responsible for ensuring safeguarding policies are fully implemented across all operational areas, including programmes, HR, partnerships, and fundraising. They ensure that all associates of Islamic Relief of staff, volunteers are trained and aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- **Safeguarding Focal Points:** Serve as the primary contact for safeguarding concerns at field level, overseeing awareness raising, training, reporting, investigations, and risk monitoring.
- **Staff, volunteers and partners:** Must adhere to the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct, act with integrity, report concerns, participate in training, and integrate safeguarding into programme delivery.

Failure to uphold safeguarding responsibilities may result in disciplinary action, contract termination, or legal consequences.

1.7 Related organisational policies

The Safeguarding Policy should be used in conjunction with other organisational policies to ensure a comprehensive and consistent approach to protection, accountability, and ethical conduct. Together, these policies create a strong governance framework that upholds safety, dignity, and integrity across our operations. These policies include, but are not limited to:

- Code of Conduct
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Field Office Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Partnership Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policy

All staff of Islamic Relief must understand and comply with these policies in their work.

Senior leadership and safeguarding focal points will oversee policy integration across HR, programme design, risk management, and governance.

2. Safeguarding commitments and responsibilities

2.1 Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)

Islamic Relief upholds a **zero-tolerance policy** towards sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) in all forms. As a faith-based organisation committed to dignity, respect, and social justice, we are dedicated to ensuring that all individuals— people we serve, staff, volunteers, and partners—are protected from any form of harm, abuse, or misconduct.

2.2 Zero-tolerance approach

Islamic Relief has a **zero-tolerance approach** to SEAH, meaning:

- Any form of SEAH is prohibited and will result in immediate disciplinary action, including termination of employment or contracts.
- No exceptions or justifications will be accepted, regardless of cultural norms, local customs, or consent obtained under coercive conditions.
- All complaints will be taken seriously, investigated fairly, and managed with confidentiality and a survivor-centred approach.
- Failure to report SEAH incidents or attempts to cover up misconduct will result in disciplinary measures.

All associates of Islamic Relief must act with integrity, uphold professional and ethical standards, and report any safeguarding concerns immediately.

2.3 Prohibited behaviours and misconduct

All associates of Islamic Relief—including staff, volunteers, trustees, contractors, ambassadors, and partners—must not engage in any behaviour that harms, exploits, abuses, or disrespects others. This applies equally to interactions with rightsholders, colleagues, partners, and community members in all contexts.

Islamic Relief works in complex and often vulnerable environments, including humanitarian aid, development programmes, and emergency response. These settings heighten safeguarding risks, particularly around SEAH,

making strict adherence to safeguarding standards essential. Below are common examples of SEAH in the context of our operations:

a. Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation refers to the actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes—including profiting monetarily, socially, or politically—from another person.

Some common examples include:

- Coerced sexual favours for job security – Pressuring a person into sexual activity for contract renewal.
- Sexual bribery – An Individual in a position of authority offering job-related benefits—such as promotions, raises, or favourable evaluations—in exchange for sexual favours.
- Transactional sex – Engaging in or facilitating sex in exchange for money, goods, services, or other benefits.
- Exploiting vulnerable individuals – Coercing displaced or at-risk individuals into sexual relationships.
- Fraternalisation – Inappropriate relationships between staff, trustees, volunteers, donors, contractors and rightsholders, compromising integrity and accountability.

b. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse refers the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Some common examples include:

- Rape or attempted rape – Forced sexual intercourse, actual or attempted.
- Sexual assault – Unwanted groping, touching, or advances towards rightsholders or colleagues.
- Child sexual abuse – Inappropriate touching or grooming of children under care.
- Sexual abuse in shelters – Exploiting individuals seeking protection from violence.

c. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment refers to a range of unacceptable and unwelcome behaviours and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to, sexual suggestions or demands, requests for 'sexual favours', sexual, verbal, or physical conduct, or gestures that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating. Harassment is assessed by its impact on the recipient, not the intent of the perpetrator.

Some common examples include:

- Verbal harassment – Inappropriate sexual comments, jokes, or suggestive remarks.
- Sending explicit content – Unsolicited sexually explicit messages or images.
- Inappropriate physical contact – Unwelcome hugging, touching, or lingering contact.
- Sexualised work environment – Repeated sexual jokes, innuendos, or explicit material in the workplace.
- Stalking or unwanted advances – Persistent and unwelcome pursuit of another person.

d. Sexual misconduct in digital and online spaces

With increasing digital engagement, sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment can also take place in online interactions.

Some common examples include:

- Grooming via social media – Building inappropriate online relationships with minors or vulnerable adults.
- Virtual harassment – Sending unwanted explicit messages or requests.
- Sharing non-consensual images – Distributing sexually explicit materials without consent.
- Coerced online interactions – Pressuring colleagues into sexualised video calls or discussions.
- Cyberbullying – Using online spaces to post rumours, threats, offensive remarks, comments on a victim's personal behaviour or pejorative labels (i.e. hate speech).

2.4 Prohibition of staff-rightsholder relationships

Islamic Relief prohibits intimate or sexual relationships between its representatives and rightsholders, irrespective of age, consent, or cultural context, due to the inherent power imbalance and potential for exploitation. In exceptional cases where a relationship does exist, it must be disclosed immediately to the Safeguarding Focal Point. The organisation will assess the situation to determine appropriate measures, which may include reassigning duties to eliminate any direct or indirect power dynamics.

All associates of Islamic Relief must:

- maintain professional boundaries and avoid any interactions that could be perceived as exploitative
- never request or accept sexual favours from rightsholders in return for assistance
- report any concerns about inappropriate relationships or potential abuses of power.

2.5 Commitment to the IASC Six Core Principles on PSEA

Islamic Relief fully endorses the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Six Core Principles Relating to the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and requires all associates of Islamic Relief to adhere to these principles in all aspects of their work. These principles are fundamental to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for rightsholders and ensuring that safeguarding remains at the core of our humanitarian and development efforts.

Islamic Relief upholds the following IASC Six Core Principles on PSEA:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by humanitarian workers constitutes an act of gross misconduct and are grounds for disciplinary action, including termination.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited, regardless of the age of majority or the legal age of consent in the country. Mistaken belief regarding a child's age is not a defence.
- Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex—including sexual favours or any form of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behaviour—is prohibited. This includes offering assistance that is conditional upon sexual relationships.
- Any sexual relationship between humanitarian workers and rightsholders is prohibited as it is based on an inherent power imbalance and risks undermining the integrity and credibility of humanitarian aid.

- Humanitarian workers must report any concerns or suspicions regarding SEA by a fellow worker through established reporting mechanisms. Failing to report is a breach of duty.
- All humanitarian agencies have a duty to create and maintain an environment that prevents SEA and promotes a culture of accountability. Managers at all levels are responsible for fostering and upholding this environment.

Islamic Relief integrates these principles across all its safeguarding policies, procedures, and training.

2.6 Additional prohibited behaviours

In addition to safeguarding against SEAH, Islamic Relief prohibits all forms of harm, misconduct, and abusive behaviour by its associates. This applies to interactions with colleagues, partners, rightsholders, and community members in all settings. The following behaviours are prohibited:

a. Physical harm and abuse

- Violence or assault – Any act that causes physical harm, injury, or undue pain to another individual.
- Corporal punishment – The use of physical force as a disciplinary measure.
- Negligence leading to harm – Creating unsafe working or programme conditions that expose staff, volunteers, or community members to physical danger.

b. Child-specific harm

- Child abuse and neglect – Any form of mistreatment or failure to act that results in harm to a child.
- Child labour and exploitation – Using children for labour that is harmful to their education, physical, mental, or emotional wellbeing.

c. People trafficking

- The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons by means of force, coercion, deception, or abuse of power for the purpose of exploitation, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, servitude, and slavery.

d. Psychological and emotional abuse

- Verbal abuse – Using threats, insults, humiliation, or degrading language.

- Bullying and intimidation – Persistent harassment, coercion, or conduct that causes distress.
- Coercive control – Manipulative behaviour that limits an individual's autonomy, freedom, or wellbeing.

e. Discrimination and harassment

- Unfair treatment – Discrimination based on race, gender, disability, age, religion, or other protected characteristics.
- Harassment – Any unwanted behaviour that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
- Exclusion of marginalised groups – Failing to protect or accommodate vulnerable individuals, including persons with disabilities and displaced communities.

f. Digital and online misconduct

- Digital exploitation – Using online platforms to deceive, manipulate, or exploit individuals, including children and vulnerable adults.
- Non-consensual data collection – Gathering, sharing, or misusing personal data, images, or confidential information without informed consent.
- Harmful AI-generated content – Creating or sharing misinformation, deepfakes, or manipulated digital content that incites harm or damages reputations.

2.7 Unsupervised contact

To minimise the risk of harm, exploitation, or abuse, Islamic Relief enforces strict guidelines on unsupervised contact between associates of Islamic Relief and the people we serve. This also applies to any contact made outside of work hours.

- One-on-one interactions with children or at-risk adults must take place in open, visible, and professional settings where they can be observed by others.
- Private or isolated interactions are prohibited, except in justified emergency situations, which must be documented.
- Whenever possible, meetings or mentoring sessions should involve multiple people, and any physical contact must be appropriate, necessary, and culturally sensitive to prevent misinterpretation or discomfort.

2.8 Staff conduct and disciplinary actions

All associates of Islamic Relief must always comply with the organisation's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. Key expectations include:

- maintaining professional behaviour and ensuring interactions with rightsholders, colleagues, and partners are respectful, appropriate, and non-exploitative
- adhering to safeguarding reporting requirements by promptly reporting any concerns, suspicions, or allegations of abuse
- avoiding conflicts of interest, including transactional relationships with rightsholders, or staff misconduct that compromises safeguarding principles
- always acting with integrity and professionalism – both during and outside of work hours – especially when interacting with donors, rightsholders, and members of the public, to uphold the organisation's reputation and avoid bringing it into disrepute.

Violations of this policy will be met with strict and decisive action, which may include, but not limited to:

- immediate suspension during an investigation
- termination of employment or contract if found guilty of SEAH violations
- verbal or written warnings for breaches
- referral to law enforcement authorities where criminal offences are involved
- permanent disqualification from working with Islamic Relief or its affiliates.

Furthermore, Islamic Relief is committed to participating in the Inter-Agency [Misconduct Disclosure Scheme](#), ensuring that individuals with a history of SEAH-related offences cannot move undetected between organisations. It should be noted that failure to disclose or report safeguarding concerns will be regarded as an act of misconduct.

3. Recruitment and Training

Islamic Relief is committed to ensuring that all individuals engaged in its work—whether as staff, volunteers, contractors, or partners—meet the highest safeguarding standards. The organisation uses robust recruitment, onboarding, and disciplinary procedures to prevent individuals who pose a safeguarding risk from joining or remaining within the organisation.

3.1 Safeguarding checks in hiring

To minimise the risk of hiring individuals with a history of misconduct, Islamic Relief conducts comprehensive safeguarding checks, including criminal background checks, vetting for child-related roles, employment history and reference verification (with safeguarding-specific references).

Islamic Relief is committed to ensuring that individuals with a history of safeguarding violations cannot move undetected between organisations. To prevent this, we will:

- screen all staff, volunteers, and contractors through the MDS before hiring
- require partners, subcontractors, and suppliers to implement safeguarding background checks for their staff
- share safeguarding misconduct records with relevant humanitarian agencies where legal and ethical standards allow.

Failure to disclose past safeguarding violations or providing false or misleading information will result in disqualification from employment or immediate contract termination.

3.2 Onboarding and induction

All new staff members are required to complete a mandatory safeguarding induction during their initial induction period. This includes:

- a formal introduction to Islamic Relief’s safeguarding policies, Code of Conduct, and reporting mechanisms
- mandatory safeguarding training, covering topics such as PSEAH, child safeguarding, and ethical conduct.

Completion of induction training is a mandatory requirement for employment. Staff in high-risk roles—particularly those with direct contact with rightsholders, including children and at-risk adults—may be subject to enhanced safeguarding checks before beginning to carry out their duties. Additionally, context-specific training may be required to address risks and ensure effective safeguarding practices.

3.3 Safeguarding Focal Point positions

To uphold the integrity and effectiveness of safeguarding practices, the Directors and Senior Management Teams actively support Safeguarding Focal Points (SFP) in executing their responsibilities impartially and without undue influence. This support includes ensuring that SFPs have the necessary autonomy, resources, and authority to address safeguarding concerns, particularly when receiving and managing reports of misconduct.

3.4. Training and capacity building

Islamic Relief is dedicated to equipping all staff, volunteers, and partners with the knowledge and skills necessary to uphold safeguarding standards and prevent harm. We ensure this through:

- **Mandatory induction** – All new personnel must complete safeguarding training during their initial induction, covering essential policies, codes of conduct, and procedures for identifying and reporting concerns.
- **Ongoing learning** – Regular refresher training is required to reinforce key principles, address emerging risks, and ensure familiarity with any updates to policies or procedures.
- **Specialised training** – Individuals in roles with higher safeguarding responsibilities, such as those working directly with vulnerable populations or overseeing safeguarding processes, receive additional, role-specific training to ensure they are well-prepared to manage complex situations.

This approach ensures that all associates of Islamic Relief are informed and capable of maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all stakeholders.

4. Safeguarding in programmes and operations

Islamic Relief is committed to embedding safeguarding principles into all programmes, operations, and field activities to ensure that its work **does no harm** and actively protects vulnerable individuals from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Safeguarding measures are required to be integrated into project design, implementation, monitoring, and partnerships to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards.

4.1 Risk assessments for programmes and activities

To proactively identify and mitigate safeguarding risks, all Islamic Relief programmes and activities must undergo a safeguarding risk assessment as part of the project design and approval process.

Programmes involving direct interaction with children, at-risk adults, refugees, people with disabilities, displaced communities, and survivors of abuse will require enhanced safeguarding measures, including greater monitoring and oversight.

4.2 Safeguarding in humanitarian and emergency responses

Islamic Relief acknowledges that humanitarian crises increase the risk of exploitation, abuse, and neglect due to displacement, weakened protection systems, and resource shortages. To mitigate these risks, safeguarding is rooted in emergency responses to ensure relevant protection measures are in place.

Islamic Relief recognises that refugees, IDPs, and crisis-affected communities face heightened risks of exploitation, trafficking, modern slavery, and abuse. Our safeguarding measures will align with the [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement \(1998\)](#) and the [IASC Guidelines on Gender-based Violence in Emergencies](#) to provide enhanced protection in humanitarian settings.

Key commitments:

- Humanitarian responses will include specific safeguarding risk assessments.
- Reporting channels will be set up in refugee camps, shelters, and emergency aid distribution sites.

- Islamic Relief will collaborate with other agencies, local authorities, and protection organisations to ensure survivors receive medical, psychosocial, and legal support, as and when required.

Staff and selected volunteers deployed in crisis settings should receive specialised safeguarding training to identify and respond to risks effectively. Robust reporting mechanisms are established to allow displaced and vulnerable individuals to report concerns safely, while partnerships with local protection agencies and law enforcement ensure survivors have access to medical, psychosocial, and legal support.

4.3 Safeguarding and protection for at-risk groups

Islamic Relief is committed to ensuring the safety, dignity, and inclusion of all at-risk groups, including children, people with disabilities, displaced communities, older persons, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), and other vulnerable individuals. The safeguarding measures below align with international safeguarding frameworks such as the CRC, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), and best practices in survivor-centred protection.

Key safeguarding measures:

- Accessible reporting mechanisms – Reporting channels must be safe, confidential, and available in appropriate formats, including child-friendly options.
- Mandatory safeguarding training – Staff, volunteers, and partners should complete training on identifying and responding to safeguarding risks for at-risk groups.
- Risk assessments and prevention – Programmes must conduct risk assessments for vulnerable groups and implement protective measures.

- Survivor-centred approach – Those affected by abuse should receive confidential support, including mapping of referral pathways and have ensured access to medical, legal, and psychosocial services.
- Community awareness and engagement – Islamic Relief will promote safeguarding awareness, ensuring that individuals understand their rights and how to report concerns.

4.4 Community engagement

Safeguarding is most effective when communities are informed, empowered, and actively engaged in their own protection. Islamic Relief is committed to:

- creating culturally appropriate, inclusive, and confidential mechanisms for reporting safeguarding concerns, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities, children, and marginalised groups
- using community channels to promote safeguarding rights and reporting channels
- adapting policies and mechanisms to local contexts to enhance relevance, effectiveness, and community ownership
- co-developing safeguarding policies and processes with communities and partners to encourage shared responsibility and prevent disguised compliance.

All reported safeguarding concerns will be addressed promptly, confidentially, and with a survivor-centred approach to ensure safety, dignity, and accountability.

4.5 Partner and contractor compliance with safeguarding standards

Islamic Relief requires all partners, contractors, and suppliers to comply with its safeguarding policies and uphold a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, exploitation, and harassment. To enforce this, all third-party entities must ensure key safeguarding requirements are embedded in any agreement with Islamic Relief, undergo screening and due diligence checks, and comply with regular safeguarding audits.

Non-compliance may result in contract termination and legal action.

5. Reporting safeguarding concerns

Islamic Relief is committed to ensuring that all safeguarding concerns are reported, managed, and addressed in a timely, confidential, and survivor-centred manner. The organisation has established clear reporting obligations, whistleblower protections, and investigation procedures to uphold accountability and protect those at risk.

All staff, volunteers, trustees, consultants, contractors, partners, and stakeholders have a mandatory duty to report any safeguarding concerns, including suspicions or allegations of abuse, exploitation, harassment, or misconduct. Reports must be made:

- immediately, or within 5 working days of becoming aware of an incident
- through designated reporting channels, including:
 - » Safeguarding Focal Points at the country or Islamic Relief Worldwide
 - » the dedicated safeguarding email: safeguarding@irworldwide.org
 - » the confidential whistleblowing email: whistleblowing@irworldwide.org
 - » local complaints mechanisms available to target communities
 - » Safecall, an independent whistleblowing service, providing staff and stakeholders with a confidential channel to report safeguarding concerns securely and anonymously.

Failure to report a safeguarding concern may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. Any attempt to conceal misconduct or interfere with an investigation may also result in serious consequences.

Key steps for reporting and response:

- **Document the concern:** If sexual exploitation or abuse is alleged or suspected, record the details accurately and promptly, noting names, dates, locations, and witnesses. Ensure the complainant's words are captured verbatim.
- **Immediate reporting:** Report the matter to the Country Director or local Safeguarding Focal Point, who must escalate it to Islamic Relief Worldwide's Head of Safeguarding via safeguarding@irworldwide.org. The global safeguarding team will respond within five working days.

- **Case management and confidentiality:** The Head of Safeguarding, and relevant senior personnel will determine the next steps, including internal investigations or reporting to authorities, ensuring strict confidentiality and survivor protection.
- **Bypassing senior staff:** If the accused is a senior staff member within the reporting structure, bypass them and report directly to the local Safeguarding Focal Point or Islamic Relief Worldwide's Head of Safeguarding.
- **Immediate protection measures:** If sexual exploitation or abuse is strongly indicated, an urgent safety plan will be developed.
- **Survivor-centred approach:** The best interests of the victim/survivor remain the priority throughout the process.
- **Escalation:** If a staff member feels appropriate action has not been taken, they may escalate the issue directly to the Head of Safeguarding.

Serious incident reporting (SIR)

Islamic Relief will manage serious incidents in a transparent, systematic, comprehensive, and timely manner to give sufficient reassurance and confidence to its regulators, partners, internal and external stakeholders, donors, and beneficiaries as well as its staff and volunteers. It will do its utmost to always preserve the integrity and credibility of the organisation in all aspects of its operations.

Islamic Relief will ensure it adopts best practice when informing the relevant authorities and its regulators of a serious incident connected to any part of its operations and to comply with its legal and regulatory duties. For comprehensive guidelines on identifying and reporting serious incidents, staff should consult the full SIR policy.

6. Confidentiality and case management

Islamic Relief ensures strict confidentiality in all safeguarding reports to protect survivors, witnesses, and whistleblowers. This includes:

- restricted access to case information, anonymous reporting options, and zero tolerance for retaliation, with disciplinary action for any threats or intimidation
- reports are managed with discretion, and personal information is not shared without consent unless legally required
- any unauthorised disclosure of confidential information that compromises the identity of a protected individual and could lead to retaliation is considered a serious breach and may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

6.1 Survivor-centred approach to handling cases

Islamic Relief is committed to a survivor-centred approach, ensuring that individuals affected by safeguarding violations receive the support and protection they need. This may include:

- respecting the survivor's wishes, rights, and dignity throughout the reporting and investigation process
- ensuring survivors are not pressured into participation and that they retain control over how their case is managed
- providing access to medical, psychosocial, and legal support, including referrals to specialist services
- implementing immediate safety measures to protect survivors from further harm. These may include relocation or additional security if necessary.

6.2 Investigation and disciplinary procedures

All safeguarding concerns will be promptly and thoroughly investigated in line with Islamic Relief's internal policies, processes, and standards. Investigations will follow these key principles:

- **Impartiality** – Investigations will be conducted objectively and without bias by trained safeguarding staff.
- **Timeliness** – We aim to commence investigations within five working days of receiving a report and seek to reach a resolution within 30 working days, wherever possible.

- **Due process** – Accused individuals will have the opportunity to respond to allegations in a fair and transparent manner.
- **Confidential documentation** – All case files will be securely stored, and access will be limited to authorised personnel.

Divisional and Country Directors are expected to provide operational and strategic support for safeguarding investigations without interfering in or influencing investigative processes. They must enable impartial, confidential, and survivor-centred responses, including recusal from direct involvement where conflicts of interest arise.

If an individual has breached safeguarding policies, the following disciplinary actions may be taken:

- Immediate suspension pending the outcome of an investigation
- Termination of employment or contract if the individual is guilty of misconduct
- Referral to law enforcement authorities where criminal activity is suspected
- Inclusion in the **MDS**, preventing the perpetrator from being rehired within the sector.

If an investigation finds insufficient evidence, steps will be taken to protect all parties involved, ensuring that survivors receive continued support and that the accused is treated fairly.

All investigations will be documented and reviewed to strengthen safeguarding measures in the future.

7. Communication and transparency

Islamic Relief is committed to fostering a culture of openness, accountability, and transparency in all safeguarding matters. Effective communication—both internally among staff and externally with rightsholders, partners, and stakeholders—ensures that safeguarding principles are understood and upheld. The organisation prioritises clear reporting, public accountability, and accessibility of safeguarding information to build trust and promote a safe environment for all.

7.1 Safeguarding communication

To embed safeguarding awareness at every level, the organisation will:

- **Communicate consistently:** Share safeguarding policies, updates, and good practices with staff, volunteers, and partners.
- **Promote a speak-up culture:** Foster an environment where staff, rightsholders, and stakeholders feel safe to raise concerns, confident that they will be heard and protected from retaliation.
- **Clarify responsibilities:** Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their safeguarding duties, including how to report concerns and the standards of behaviour expected of them.

Country offices will ensure that relevant individuals in the communities they serve are informed of Islamic Relief's zero-tolerance approach to SEAH and that they have access to safe and confidential reporting mechanisms.

7.2 Critical incidents

In cases of critical safeguarding incidents—particularly those that may become public due to their severity, scale, or involvement of high-profile or senior staff—Islamic Relief will engage with colleagues responsible for crisis communications and reputation management at the earliest opportunity. Early coordination ensures informed planning, timely response, and effective crisis management. This approach aims to minimise reputational harm, uphold the dignity and rights of all parties involved, and maintain the trust of stakeholders. All communications and responses will align with legal obligations, ethical standards, and a survivor-centred, do-no-harm approach.

7.3 Accessible safeguarding materials

Islamic Relief is committed to ensuring that safeguarding information is accessible and understood by all stakeholders. Key safeguarding commitments and reporting mechanisms will be communicated in ways that are inclusive, culturally appropriate, and accessible to diverse audiences, including those with language, literacy, or disability-related needs.

7.4 Ethical use of images, videos, and communication materials

Islamic Relief is committed to ensuring that all media content respects the dignity, rights, safety, and wellbeing of those portrayed.

Key principles:

Individuals must be informed about the purpose of the media and explicitly asked for consent. Participation is voluntary, and individuals have the right to refuse.

- Always seek informed consent from the community or site before capturing media.
- Obtain parental or guardian consent before photographing or filming children or vulnerable adults. If a child is mature enough, their own consent should also be sought.
- Never publish full names, contact details, or identifiable locations of children or at-risk individuals.
- Media should accurately represent individuals and their circumstances without manipulation or misrepresentation. Care must be taken when portraying people with disabilities, refugees, and those affected by conflict or disasters.
- Individuals must be dressed appropriately according to their cultural context, and sensitive information (e.g. HIV status) must not be disclosed.

8. Monitoring Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

Islamic Relief is committed to continuous improvement, accountability, and transparency in its safeguarding practices.

8.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

A Monitoring and Evaluation framework is in place to assess safeguarding effectiveness, identify risks, and ensure compliance across all levels of the organisation.

8.2 Accountability

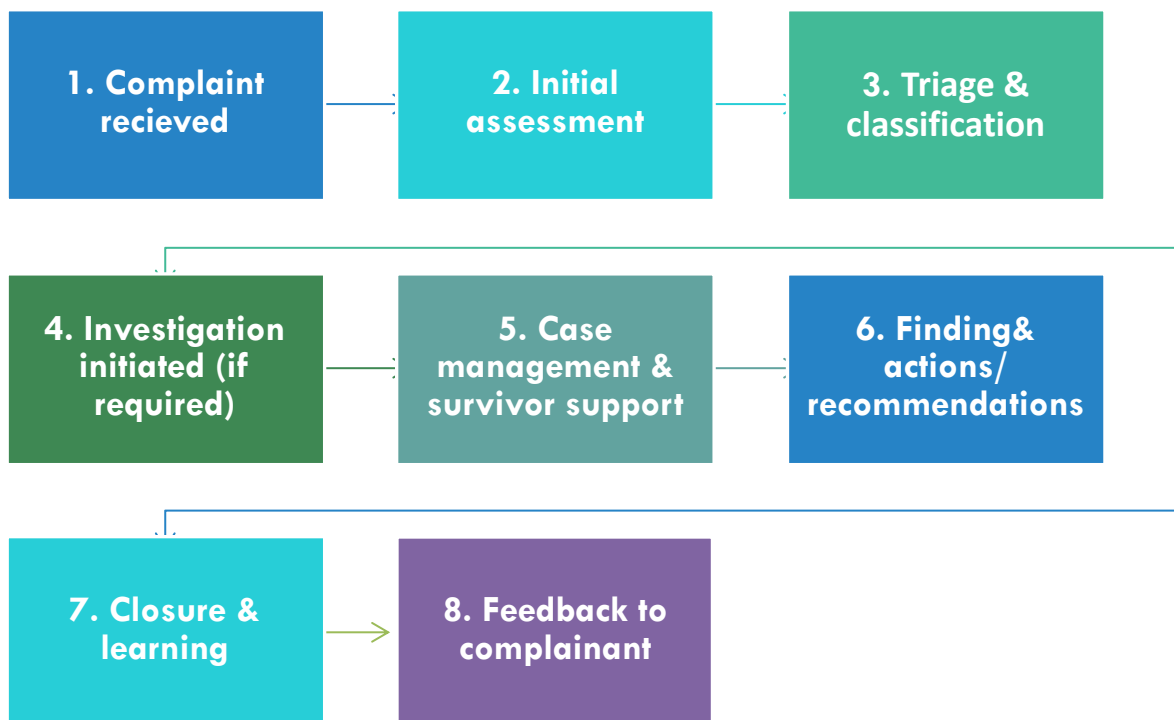
Islamic Relief is committed to maintaining a culture of accountability where safeguarding is a shared responsibility at all levels of the organisation. Trustees, senior leadership, staff, volunteers, and partners are all expected to uphold the highest safeguarding standards and ensure that policies and procedures are effectively implemented.

8.3 Learnings

Islamic Relief recognises the importance of learning from safeguarding cases to continuously improve safeguarding measures. To maintain the highest safeguarding standards, Islamic Relief will:

- conduct formal reviews of the Safeguarding Policy every two years or more regularly, due to changes in legislation, donor requirements, or operational contexts
- update safeguarding procedures to reflect lessons learned from incidents, sector-wide guidelines, and evolving risks
- ensure that policy updates are effectively communicated to all staff, volunteers, and partners through training sessions and written communications.

Appendix - Complaints process



Standard complaints process: Step-by-step breakdown

1. Complaint received

- A complaint is submitted through one of these official channels:
 - » Email (e.g., safeguarding@irworldwide.org)
 - » Hotline or whistleblowing mechanism (e.g. Safecall)
 - » In-person report (e.g. to a Safeguarding Focal Point or Manager)
 - » Anonymous reporting system (if available).

The complaint is acknowledged within a set timeframe (e.g. 5 working days).

- The complaint should be reported to the relevant director, unless it relates to the Director themselves. In country offices, complaints should be reported to the Country Director, and in Islamic Relief Worldwide, to the relevant divisional director(s).
- For complaints related to directors please contact Islamic Relief Worldwide's Safeguarding Lead/Team.

2. Initial assessment

- The SFP or Islamic Relief Worldwide's Safeguarding Team conducts an initial review to determine:
 - » if the complaint falls within the safeguarding scope
 - » the urgency and severity of the case
 - » whether the individual is at immediate risk and requires urgent protection.
- If the complaint is outside safeguarding, it is referred to the appropriate department (e.g. HR for workplace grievances, back to a country programme team if not sensitive, etc.).

3. Triage and classification

- The complaint is categorised as one of the following:
 - » SEAH-related complaint
 - » child safeguarding concern (risk or harm to a child)
 - » workplace misconduct (bullying, harassment of staff/rightsholders)
 - » Other safeguarding concerns (e.g. neglect, financial exploitation, discrimination, etc).
- A decision is made on whether to proceed with a formal investigation or alternative resolution.

4. Investigation initiated (if required)

- A designated investigation team (internal or external) is assigned.
- The investigation follows confidentiality and survivor-centred principles.
- Evidence is collected through interviews, documentation, and witness statements.
- The accused is given an opportunity to respond under fair and due process.

5. Case management and survivor support

- Immediate safety and wellbeing of survivors and complainants are prioritised.
- Support services may include:
 - » medical assistance
 - » psychosocial or trauma counselling
 - » legal guidance.
- Safeguarding teams work with local authorities or protection services if necessary.

6. Findings and action

- Findings from the investigation are reviewed by investigation manager, safeguarding team (and, if necessary, General Counsel).
- Where complaints are upheld or substantiated, a disciplinary hearing will be held to allow due process.
- Appropriate disciplinary or corrective actions are taken, which may include:
 - » employment termination or contract cancellation
 - » legal referral where criminal activity is found
 - » policy or procedural changes to prevent future incidents
 - » informing Reputation Management if the case is of sufficient seriousness that a public statement or disclosure is required.
- If the complaint is unsubstantiated, steps are taken to protect all parties involved.

7. Closure and learning

- The case is formally closed, and documentation is securely stored in line with data protection laws.
- Lessons learned are reviewed and applied to strengthen future safeguarding measures.
- If systemic issues are identified, policy updates or additional staff training may be implemented.

8. Feedback to complainant (where appropriate)

- Where possible, and while maintaining confidentiality, the complainant is informed of the case outcome.
- If dissatisfied with the process, the complainant is provided with appeal or escalation options.



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