

Safeguarding and Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults



Hope Spring for all Nations

Hope Spring For Nations
P.O Box 540 Buea
Southwest Region Of Cameroon
Email: info@hsfan.org
Contact: +971567064561

APPROVED: 5TH OF JANUARY, 2024

UPDATED: 01TH OF AUGUST, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. CONTEXT	3
2. OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES	5
3. PARTICIPATION	6
4. SAFETY AND PROTECTION.....	9
5. DIGNITY	10
6. MEANINGFUL ACCESS.....	11
7. PARTICIPATION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8. DATA MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION.....	12
9. ABUSE.....	13
10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	16

1. CONTEXT

Hope Spring For All Nations (HSFAN) is to actively reach out to and uplift the most vulnerable among us—children, youths, the elderly women/men—by providing essential support and resources to overcome poverty. We are committed to fostering an environment of hope and love, where people from all walks of life are empowered to achieve their fullest potential.

Despite its longstanding commitment to the vulnerable, HSFAN did not establish a formal Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) policy until 2024. Prior to this, the organization had policies for widows, widowers and vulnerable children (OVC), which were consolidated into a single document in 2019.

AAP encompasses the practices and systems that humanitarian organizations use to ensure ongoing, meaningful involvement of affected communities in decisions that impact their lives.

Accountability involves the ethical use of resources and decision-making by humanitarian agencies, ensuring effective programming that respects the dignity and autonomy of the community. As a local humanitarian organization prioritizing human rights, HSFAN NGO is committed to putting people first and valuing the diverse experiences and needs of all individuals within its operational areas.

This document will guide all HSFAN activities to ensure that those affected are treated with dignity and cultural sensitivity. It will be reviewed annually and updated as needed, with physical copies available at all field offices for staff and volunteers.

2. DEFINITIONS

- Children: Individuals under 18 years of age.
- Vulnerable Adult: An individual over 18 who is at significant risk of harm or exploitation due to personal circumstances, lacking the ability to change those circumstances without assistance.
- Safeguarding: Measures to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of individuals, particularly children and vulnerable adults, from abuse, harm, and neglect. This policy aims to prevent harm and mitigate vulnerabilities in interactions with HSFAN.

3. OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

Principles:

The policy is grounded in the four humanitarian principles: Neutrality, Impartiality, Independence, and Humanity, alongside the Do No Harm Principle, which mandates minimizing any potential negative impacts of well-intentioned interventions.

Objectives:

This policy seeks to recognize the inherent rights of affected populations, including specific rights as vulnerable groups, such as the right to assistance. It aims to:

- Enhance protection and service for vulnerable community members.
- Ensure dignity and voice for constituents.
- Provide meaningful access to services.
- Prevent harm through HSFAN's operations.
- Account for project progress, results, and timelines to affected populations.
- Address, report, and integrate complaints and feedback.
- Implement disciplinary actions for staff or volunteers involved in any incidents.

4. PARTICIPATION

All HSFAN actions must ensure that individuals of all ages and backgrounds are meaningfully engaged and consulted about their needs and preferences.

HSFAN staff are required to facilitate participation at all stages of the project cycle (assessment, planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation), ensuring accessibility for all community groups.

HSFAN is responsible for providing timely, accurate, and relevant information to all groups about:

- (i) Their rights and entitlements.
- (ii) HSFAN's programs and those of its partners.

Information must be shared in culturally appropriate languages, formats, and media accessible to all community groups.

Field staff must ensure systematic receipt and response to both formal and informal feedback from affected individuals, taking corrective action as needed. Project Managers must establish and maintain effective feedback systems using various communication channels suitable for sensitive and non-sensitive feedback. The Heads of Department, under the Programs Manager, must ensure that feedback mechanisms are in place within one month of a project's start.

Feedback should be collected, acknowledged, assessed, referred to for assistance if needed, and responded to promptly, with a maximum response time of 30 days for normal complaints, 7 days for severe complaints, and 24 hours for urgent issues.

Project Managers should engage affected individuals as partners throughout the project cycle, reporting assessment results and follow-up actions back to them.

Specific Regulations:

4.1 Involving Participants in Project Design: Whenever possible, projects should include focus group discussions to understand the feasibility of approaches and critical needs. If not feasible, past evaluations and field feedback should guide project design and activity planning.

4.2 Feedback Loops: Effective feedback loops should be created and maintained within all projects. A high volume of complaints indicates robust communication channels and opportunities for improvement. Feedback mechanisms include help desks, suggestion boxes, hotlines, feedback forms, surveys, and complaint committee meetings, depending on the project's needs.

4.2.1 Feedback Review Meetings: Organized monthly under the Programs Manager's leadership.

4.2.2 Reporting: Beneficiary feedback is reported directly to the Programs Manager using a consolidated complaint database.

4.2.3 Urgent Complaints: Reported within 24 hours to both the Programs Director and Executive Director. Specific reporting mechanisms for sexual abuse are outlined in the policy.

4.3 Feedback Tools: Include various mechanisms like Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms, satisfaction surveys, micro-surveys, focus group discussions, evaluation meetings, and suggestion boxes. The Program Manager is responsible for maintaining these tools, ensuring feedback is actionable and leads to visible changes.

4.4 Neglect of Feedback Mechanisms: Investigative evaluations may be conducted post-project if feedback mechanisms are neglected.

4.5 Capacity Building: Former beneficiaries, who have been successfully empowered, should be used as facilitators, community workers, mentors, and monitoring agents whenever possible.

4.6 Targeting: Should involve community structures rather than just individual leaders or key informants, with criteria and preliminary assessments being participatory.

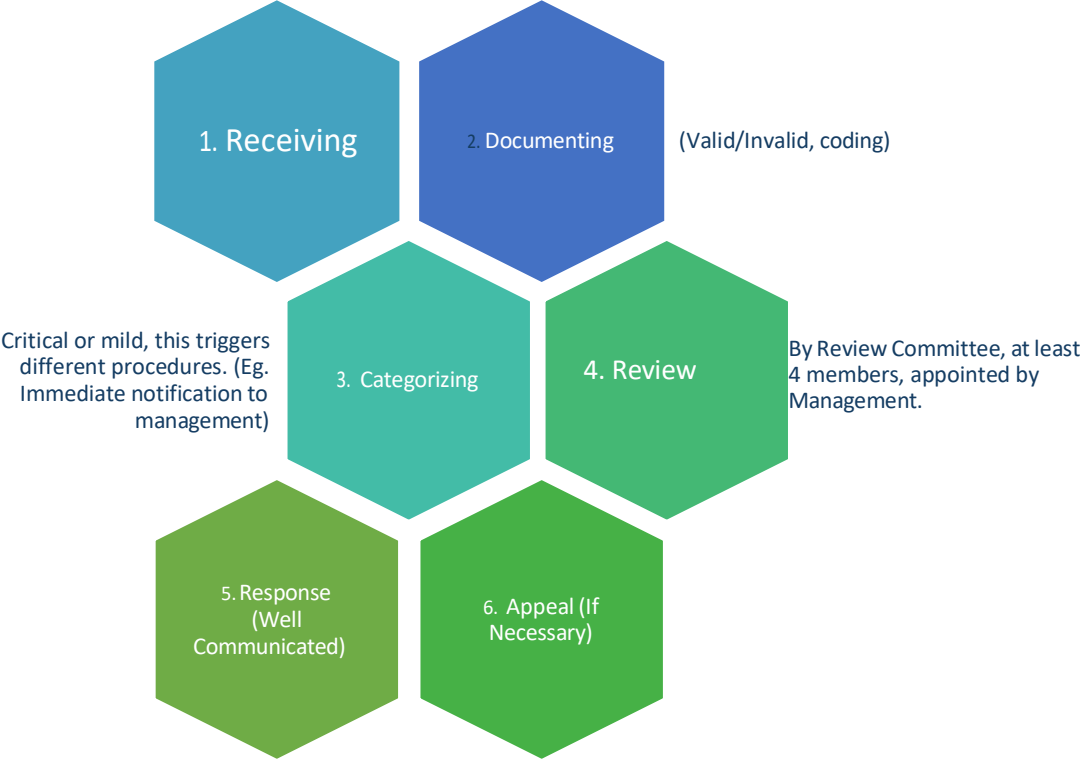
4.7 Logistics: Waybills must be sent to community leaders for supervising item offloading, verifying quantities, and signing for receipt.

4.8 Entitlements: Ration boards or Kit content should be displayed at distribution sites for beneficiaries to verify their entitlements before signing.

4.9 Humanitarian Committees: Created to oversee item distribution within the community, collect feedback, and organize monthly meetings to review and plan distributions.

4.10 Immediate Response Channels: For critical complaints (e.g., abuse, misappropriation, fraud, harassment) must be established independently from field staff.

4.11 Complaint Processing Cycle: The procedure for handling complaints is detailed separately.



1. Compensation

HSFAN compensates community volunteers for tasks such as loading and handling goods, managing crowds, data entry, and field surveys. Some roles, such as those on complaint committees, are voluntary. The organization also hires field workers from the community. Payment terms are clearly communicated before any work begins and are explained multiple times to ensure understanding and acceptance. HSFAN pays individuals directly according to project specifications, avoiding middlemen or community leaders. While payment rates for common tasks like off-loading are publicly shared, the salaries of locally hired staff are not disclosed.

2. Safety and Protection

All activities must be designed and executed to ensure the safety of participants and staff.

Regulations:

- Risk Assessments: Each project requires a risk assessment before implementation. The corresponding mitigation plan must be part of the project action plan, addressing risks to both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.
- Documentation: Risk assessments and mitigation strategies are recorded in a risk register maintained by the Programs Manager.
- Timing: Schedule activities to avoid jeopardizing participants' safety, including before and after the event.
- Type of Activity: All activities must undergo risk assessments, with potential adjustments or cancellations based on safety concerns. Mitigation measures for identified risks must be in place.
- Security Clearance: Obtain official clearance from both state and non-state armed forces to ensure safety.

3. Dignity

Our aim is to empower participants towards self-reliance, ensuring their dignity is upheld.

Regulations:

- Staff Interaction: Staff working with vulnerable groups should avoid inappropriate jokes and excessive emotional responses. They must interact with respect, calmness, and positivity, avoiding terms like “orphan,” “IDP,” or “refugee.”
- Activity Impact: Assess the impact of activities on participants' dignity, ensuring it supports their self-reliance and fosters equality.
- Photography: A designated staff member is responsible for taking pictures. Personal photos are not allowed. The photographer must introduce themselves and explain the purpose of their work, ensuring no picture compromises dignity.
- Consent: Obtain verbal consent for all pictures and written consent for individual photos. For children, consent must come from parents or guardians.
- Dignified Imagery: Only dignified images are used, avoiding any that show rags, dirt, wounds, or nudity. Pictures should ideally depict participants after receiving aid.
- Cross-Checking: All pictures for publication must be reviewed by senior staff.
- Sharing Content: Where possible, share online content featuring participants with them.

4. Meaningful Access

Activities should ensure full and equal access for all target populations, including the most vulnerable.

Regulations:

- Safe Planning: Ensure activities are planned in a secure environment, considering risks to participants.
- Awareness: Use various methods to inform the target population, including door-to-door notifications, community channels, and public announcements.
- Accessibility: Activities should be held in accessible locations and scheduled to minimize travel and ensure safety.
- Communication: Provide at least 48 hours' notice for activities, ideally one week. Communicate any changes promptly.
- Verification: Only target beneficiaries with confirmed donor contracts and verified assistance.

5. Data Management and Protection

Safeguard personal information of vulnerable populations and maintain confidentiality.

Regulations:

- Record Keeping: Retain information about activities involving vulnerable adults and children for the duration of the project and ten years afterward. Keep personal files of staff interacting with vulnerable populations for twelve years.
- Data Storage: Store personal data with designated staff using secure tools and encryption where possible. Unauthorized access to personal data is prohibited.
- Data Handling: Data needed for project execution must be destroyed within a week unless sanitized data is shared with authorized partners.

6. Abuse

Abuse involves causing harm or failing to act to prevent harm. It includes:

- Physical Abuse: Deliberate harm causing illness.
- Sexual Abuse: Involving a child or vulnerable adult in sexual activities.
- Emotional Abuse: Persistent emotional mistreatment causing severe adverse effects.
- Neglect: Failing to meet basic needs, leading to serious impairment.

Regulations:

- Investigation: An investigative commission will handle reports of abuse and report to the Executive Director.
- Sanctions: Staff involved in abuse will be dismissed immediately, with judicial action if applicable.
- Neglect: An investigative commission will address neglect cases.

7. Case Management and Referrals

The focal person receiving complaints should collect essential information for follow-up.

Regulations:

- Information Collection: Include details of the incident, contact preferences, and the date of the statement.
- Referral: Referrals should be handled confidentially, with necessary services provided to those affected by abuse. Gender-Based Violence cases should be referred to case managers.

8. Confidentiality

Maintain strict confidentiality regarding abuse cases.

Regulations:

- Information Sharing: Share information only with explicit consent or if there is imminent danger. Staff involved in disclosures must not share details unnecessarily.
- Identity Protection: The identity of individuals contacting the safeguarding focal person will be protected unless consent is given or required by investigation.

9. Disciplinary Measures

Regulations:

- Sanctions: Disciplinary actions, including suspension and dismissal, will be taken against staff involved in abuse or failing to report abuse.
- Malicious Reporting: False reports intended to harm others will be treated as misconduct.

10. Training, Dissemination, and Prevention

Dissemination:

- Provide the policy to new staff during orientation and require them to sign an acknowledgment form.
- Include safeguarding commitments in third-party contracts.

Training:

- Incorporate safeguarding into new staff induction and provide annual refresher training.

Prevention:

- Conduct background checks on all recruits.
- Sensitize beneficiaries about safeguarding risks and reporting mechanisms.
- Appoint and monitor safeguarding focal points for each project.

11. Gender Equality

Clauses:

- Gender Quota: Implement a 70% women and youth quota and a 30% men quota, monitored quarterly.
- Maternity Leave: Provide 3 months' paid leave and additional breastfeeding time.
- Gender Marker: Use IASC's gender marker in all projects.
- Promotion: Engage in annual outreach and capacity building related to gender issues.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

Regulations:

- Chief Executive Director: Overall policy ownership.
- Executive Director: Oversees complaint and feedback mechanisms.
- Program Manager: Safeguarding lead.
- Department Heads and Project Manager: Ensure compliance, promote accountability, and review safeguarding risks.

JANET SAMA ALOBWEDE MESANG

CEO



Agreement to Safeguarding Policy

I,, hereby agree to adhere to and uphold the Safeguarding Policy of HSFAN NGO. I have thoroughly reviewed the policy and fully understand the responsibilities and obligations it entails for safeguarding vulnerable populations.

By signing this agreement, I commit to:

- 1. Policy Adherence: Abide by all aspects of the Safeguarding Policy, including risk assessments, safety measures, and confidentiality requirements.
- 2. Reporting Obligations: Report any suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation immediately through the proper channels and cooperate fully with any investigations or follow-up actions.
- 3. Respect and Dignity: Treat all individuals with respect and dignity, ensuring that my actions and behaviors align with the organization’s values of empowerment and equality.
- 4. Training Participation: Engage in all required safeguarding training and updates, ensuring my knowledge and practices remain current.
- 5. Confidentiality Maintenance: Protect the confidentiality of sensitive information related to safeguarding concerns and only share information on a need-to-know basis, as required by the policy.

I acknowledge that non-compliance with this policy may lead to disciplinary measures, including possible termination of my association with HSFAN NGO.

Signed:

 Name.....
 Position.....
 Date.....

Program Manager :

 Name.....
 Position.....
 Date.....