



## Rise Up Foundation Nepal (RUF-N)

# Safeguarding Policy

Document Control	
Approved by	Board of Directors
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### 1. Policy Statement

Human dignity and protection are at the core of our mission at **Rise Up Foundation Nepal (RUF-N)**. We are committed to promoting human rights, social justice, and creating a safe and respectful environment for marginalized communities, including women, children, and sexual/gender minorities. Our organizational culture prioritizes the well-being and protection of all individuals we work with, ensuring they live free from harassment, exploitation, and abuse. We recognize our responsibility to safeguard these groups against any harm, and we are dedicated to maintaining a supportive and inclusive workplace.

We believe that inequalities and vulnerabilities, especially those experienced by women, children, and marginalized communities, necessitate heightened protection measures. Our approach is survivor-centered, focusing on dignity, respect, and confidentiality. We enforce a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of abuse and are committed to thorough investigations and appropriate disciplinary actions. We strive to empower all voices within our community, ensuring their rights and safety are upheld, and we advocate against harmful cultural practices while complying with local and international safeguarding legislation.

### 2. Policy Purpose

This policy demonstrates Rise Up Foundation Nepal's commitment to protecting women, children and gender minorities from all forms of harm, abuse, and exploitation, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, and neglect. Developed with practical guidelines and tools, it aims to prevent abuse and enhance safeguarding within our work. We strive to create an open and aware environment where concerns about safety and well-being can be raised and managed fairly, prioritizing the best interests of women, children and gender minorities.

Maintaining safe environments is a shared responsibility. The policy focuses on:

**Prevention:** Raising awareness, good practice, training, and safer recruitment to minimize risks.

**Training:** Ensuring all associated with our work are aware of and comply with safeguarding obligations.

**Reporting:** Providing clear steps and responsibilities for reporting concerns.

**Response:** Supporting and protecting individuals when concerns arise, investigating thoroughly, and taking corrective action to prevent recurrence.

The ultimate goal is to secure women, children and gender minorities from social discrimination and exploitation related to our development programs, ensuring positive and safe social milieus through diligent monitoring and adherence to safeguarding practices.



### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all members including board, general and life-long members, staffs, volunteers, and consultants (collectively Employees and Associates) of Rise Up Foundation Nepal. It also extends to external experts, advisors, agents, representatives, individuals working with or for the organization, beneficiaries, and any others who come into contact with women, children and gender minorities through our programs.

The policy is applicable at all times, both during and outside normal working hours. Actions by Employees and Associates that contradict this policy, even outside work hours, will be considered violations of the policy.

### 4. Principles

**Zero Tolerance of Abuse and Exploitation:** RUF-N has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and exploitation against women, children and LGBTIQ+. This will be enacted via robust prevention and response work, offering support to survivors and holding those responsible for harm and intolerable behavior to account.

**Best Interest of Survivors (Survivors-Centered):** In all actions of RUF-N, the best interests of the survivors shall be our primary consideration. Concerning the safety or wellbeing of survivors, RUF-N believes survivors have the right to be active participants in all matters affecting their lives; that they can make choices and decisions; that they have the right to share the power other hold and that they have a voice to influence people and events.

RUF-N provides protective environments for survivors in all operations and activities. It will act with intention and foresight to ensure safeguarding risks are identified, monitored and mitigated against in the assessment of its operations - to prevent the risk of an individual being abused, exploited or harmed.

**Non-Discrimination, Respect and Dignity:** RUF-N believes that every individual including women, children and LGBTIQ+ is entitled to be treated with respect and dignity. It will apply safeguarding measures equally to them, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or ethnicity.

**Confidentiality:** RUF-N will manage all safeguarding concerns with strict confidentiality, ensuring the privacy and protection of individuals involved, mostly in sharing sensitive information in relation to safeguarding incidents reported to us. Information that identifies individuals will only be shared with due consideration to the safety of an individual, witnesses or subject of complaint, or to protect the integrity of an investigation.

**Accountability:** RUF-N ensures that all members, staff and associates are accountable for upholding this policy and adhering to safeguarding protocols. Specific safeguarding roles and responsibilities is delegated to a member to effectively embed safe organisational practice across all programs and activities. RUF-N will ensure an organisational safe culture which is transparent about safeguarding issues occurring within the organization, in line with privacy regulations and within legal frameworks and where any issues or concerns of safeguarding or poor practice can be raised and discussed.

### 5. Definitions

**Sexual Harassment-** Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature having the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of an individual, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

**Sexual Abuse-** It involves forcing or enticing a individual to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the survivor is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving people in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a person in preparation for abuse.



**Child/girls Protection:** The prevention of and response to significant harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. Child Protection is an activity or initiative designed to protect children from all forms of violence. This includes the integration of child protection into all thematic areas of programming to enhance protective environments for children in the community.

**Online Sexual Exploitation:** Includes all acts of a sexually exploitative nature carried out against an individual that has at some stage, connection to the online environment. It includes any use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that results in sexual exploitation or causes an individual to be sexually exploited or results in or causes images or other material documenting such sexual exploitation to be produced, bought, sold, distributed or transmitted.

**Trafficking:** Relates to any role in the recruitment, transportation or receipt of people for the purpose of exploitation, by means of threat, force or other forms of coercion. This includes abuse of power.

**Safeguarding:** Actions to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of individuals, especially those who are vulnerable.

**Neglect:** The persistent failure to meet a survivor's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of their health or development.

## 6. Safeguarding Procedures

### 6.1 Recruitment and Training

**Recruitment:** RUF-N shall implement rigorous vetting processes including background checks, references, and interviews to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers.

**Training:** RUF-N shall provide mandatory safeguarding training/orientation for all members, employees, volunteers, and associates. This will cover recognizing signs of abuse, reporting mechanisms, and best practices for maintaining a safe environment.

**Behavior:** RUF-N shall establish clear guidelines on appropriate behavior and interactions, including maintaining professional boundaries and avoiding situations that could lead to abuse or exploitation.

**Boundaries:** RUF-N shall ensure that all members, staff and volunteers maintain appropriate boundaries in their interactions with beneficiaries and avoid any form of inappropriate conduct.

**6.3 Reporting Mechanisms-** RUF-N shall follow the steps below for information collection, investigation and response.

**Step 1: Identifying a Safeguarding Concern-** Any individual (member, staff, volunteer, beneficiary, or other stakeholder) who identifies a concern related to abuse, exploitation, harassment, or neglect should document the incident as soon as possible. The individual should note down details such as date, time, location, individuals involved, and the nature of the concern.

**Step 2: Reporting the Concern-** The concern should be reported immediately to the designated Safeguarding lead (Ms. Saraswati Pathak). The report should be made using confidential and accessible channels like dedicated email, phone line, text messages, verbally or any other means available. RUF-N shall ensure protection for the reporter from any form of retaliation or adverse consequences.

**Step 3: Initial Assessment-** Upon receiving the report, the Safeguarding Lead shall conduct an initial assessment to determine the immediate risks to the individual(s) involved. If there is immediate danger, the Safeguarding Lead shall take steps to ensure the safety of the individual(s), which may include removing the alleged perpetrator from the environment or providing urgent medical or psychological support. If the Safeguarding Lead finds something serious or the case attracts Police case, she shall immediately inform to the Police.

**Step 4: Detailed Investigation-** A team led by the Safeguarding Lead shall be formed to conduct a thorough investigation. The team shall include individuals trained in handling such sensitive matters. For that, experts can be outsourced. The investigation team shall collect all relevant information and

evidence, including witness statements, documents, and any other pertinent materials. They will maintain strict confidentiality during the investigation to protect the privacy of all parties involved.

**Step 5: Decision and Action-** Based on the findings of the investigation and recommendation of investigation team, the Safeguarding Lead and the Board of Directors should decide on the necessary actions. If the concern is substantiated, appropriate disciplinary measures should be taken against the perpetrator. This may include termination of employment or legal action. RUF-N shall ensure that the survivor(s) receive the necessary support, which could include counseling, medical care, or legal assistance.

**Step 6: Documentation and Reporting-** The team shall document all stages of the process, including the initial report, investigation findings, actions taken, and support provided. These records shall be securely stored. If the situation requires, report the case to relevant local authorities or international bodies in line with legal obligations.

**Step 7: Review and Follow-up-** Safeguarding Lead shall continuously monitor the situation to ensure that the actions taken have effectively mitigated the risk and that the survivors(s) are safe. RUF-N then reviews the safeguarding policy and reporting process after the incident to identify any areas for improvement.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

### 1. Board of Directors-

- Approve and oversee the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Ensure the necessary resources (financial, human, and technical) are allocated to support safeguarding activities.
- Hold the organization accountable for upholding the policy and take ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the organization.
- Regularly review and update the Safeguarding Policy to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

### 2. Designated Safeguarding Lead (Ms. Saraswati Pathak)

- Lead and manage the safeguarding function within the organization.
- Conduct initial assessments of any safeguarding concerns reported and determine immediate actions needed to protect individuals.
- Oversee the investigation of safeguarding concerns, ensuring a fair, thorough, and confidential process.
- Recommend appropriate actions based on investigation findings, including disciplinary measures or reporting to external authorities.
- Ensure all members, staff, volunteers, and associates receive regular safeguarding training and are aware of the reporting mechanisms.
- Ensure that survivors receive the necessary support, including psychological, medical, and legal assistance.
- Maintain strict confidentiality throughout the reporting and investigation process.
- Report serious safeguarding incidents to the Board of Directors and relevant external bodies as required.

### 3. Safeguarding Investigation Team

- Conduct thorough investigations into reported safeguarding concerns, under the direction of the Safeguarding Lead.
- Gather all relevant information, evidence, and witness statements to ensure a comprehensive investigation.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the investigation to protect the identities and privacy of all involved parties.

- Compile and present the findings to the Safeguarding Lead and the Board of Directors for further action.

#### **4. All Members, Staff, Volunteers, and Associates**

- Adhere to the Safeguarding Policy and procedures in all interactions within and outside the organization.
- Promptly report any concerns or allegations of abuse, exploitation, or neglect to the Safeguarding Lead.
- Participate in mandatory safeguarding training and stay informed about the policy and procedures.
- Maintain professional boundaries and conduct that align with the organization's safeguarding principles.
- Offer support to survivors as per the guidelines and under the direction of the Safeguarding Lead.

#### **5. Whistleblower Protection Role**

- Ensure that individuals who report safeguarding concerns in good faith are protected from retaliation or any negative consequences.
- Safeguard the identity and privacy of whistleblowers.
- Provide additional support to whistleblowers if they face any form of backlash.

#### **6. Monitoring & Evaluation Role**

- Continuously monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding measures within the organization.
- Gather feedback from beneficiaries, staff, and volunteers on safeguarding practices.
- Use feedback and monitoring data to recommend improvements to the Safeguarding Policy and reporting mechanisms.

These roles and responsibilities ensure that safeguarding is embedded into the culture and operations of Rise Up Foundation Nepal (RUF-N), helping to create a safe environment for all beneficiaries, staff, and stakeholders.

RUF-N shall conduct an annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures to ensure they remain effective, relevant and update the policy as necessary based on feedback and evolving best practices. Similarly, the feedback shall be collected from members, beneficiaries, staff, and volunteers on safeguarding practices.

#### **8. Communication**

RUF-N shall conduct regular communication and awareness programs to educate beneficiaries, staff, and volunteers about safeguarding policies, procedures, and their rights and responsibilities. It will ensure that safeguarding information is accessible to all beneficiaries, including those with disabilities or language barriers.

#### **9. Legal Framework**

RUF-N make sure that national and international laws, regulations, and guidelines on safeguarding are aligned with this policy including those related to child protection and the rights of women and marginalized communities. For that, it will work with relevant authorities, organizations, and stakeholders to enhance safeguarding measures and share best practices.

#### **10. Conclusion**

Rise Up Foundation Nepal (RUF-N) is dedicated to creating a safe and inclusive environment for all. This policy reflects our commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of our beneficiaries and staff. By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to prevent harm, promote a culture of respect and inclusion, and ensure the protection of vulnerable individuals.