

# **AME Foundation Safeguarding Policy**

## **PURPOSE**

AME Foundation (AMEF) recognises its duty to care and protect persons it comes into contact during its work. It also recognises the inequities and vulnerabilities in the context it works. AMEF commits to creating a safeguarding environment where potential risks are identified, considered and minimised with clear processes and procedures in place.

This Policy lays out the commitments made by AMEF, and informs staff, non-staff personnel, consultants, of their responsibilities, in relation to safeguarding.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

AMEF values and maintains an organisational culture that is respectful, ethical and fair.

AMEF's Vision and Mission are based on a strong Value premises. AMEF's organizational Values include: Empathy, Equality, Participation, Accountability, People Development, Conflict Resolution, Gender and Conservation. The organizational culture is built around operational work practices and safeguarding measures embedded at various levels across the organization.

The Board, Executive Director and Functional Team Leaders ensure high ethical standards, Gender relationships, transparent functioning and well-being of human resources. They have zero tolerance with respect to any abuse or exploitation of target groups or within the organization.

Safeguarding in this Policy means the steps that AME Foundation takes to keep all persons with whom it works and comes into contact with through its activities (including children and at-risk adults) safe from sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment and other forms of harm caused by the misuse of power.

## **SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

This Policy applies to i) AMEF Project staff ii) AME Field staff iii) AME Admin staff iv) SMEF Non project staff, and AMEF Consultants working through a formal contractual arrangement delivering activities and services on behalf of AME Foundation. This Policy does not cover safeguarding concerns in the wider community not perpetrated by AMEF staff or associated non-staff personnel, and consultants.

## WORDS/PHRASES AND MEANING

**Sexual exploitation** – actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power or trust, for sexual purposes, including but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

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

**Child sexual exploitation** includes sexual relations with a **child**, in any context, defined as a human being below the age of 18 years. Child sexual exploitation and abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination, and may result in criminal proceedings

**Sexual harassment** – any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature, whether on a one-time basis or in a continuous series of incidents:

- that might reasonably be expected to cause offence or humiliation to the individual; or
- that might reasonably be perceived by the individual as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion.

**Child abuse** – child abuse includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, and commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

**Child labour** – child labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and strenuous work. Whilst child labour takes many different forms, the worst forms of child labour include:

- all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

**Examples of a safeguarding concern or allegation can include but are not limited to:**

- Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment–this includes rape, sexual assault, indecent exposure, forcing a person to engage in prostitution or pornography, inappropriate looking or touching
  - Online or cyberbullying
  - Abuse of trust
  - Psychological and emotional abuse
  - Modern slavery
  - Child labour

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

AMEF will:

- Ensure all staff and consultants, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this Policy.
- Implement appropriate safeguarding procedures when Selection and Recruitment, managing and deploying staff and consultants in its project, field and administrative work.
- Provide its staff with the appropriate level of training and/or learning opportunities to help recognise, and respond to signs of sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment and other forms of harm.
- Raise awareness with all its staff, consultants and beneficiaries with whom they work, understand their role under this Policy
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process within its periodic Performance Review systems and other need based review and safeguard mechanisms.
- In extraordinary situations, Board constitutes a special committee as and when considered necessary to deal with issues beyond Performance Review Systems

AMEF staff, non-staff personnel, consultants will be expected to:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents sexual exploitation, abuse/harassment
- Report any concerns or suspicions to AMEF regarding any suspected or alleged violations of this Policy, in accordance with the reporting procedures set out below.

## **CORE PRINCIPLES**

This Policy is aligned with the six core principles of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee relating to a Code of Conduct to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
4. Any sexual relationship between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefitting from such humanitarian assistance and protection that involves improper use of rank or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.

6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

## **POLICY ACTIONS**

AMEF will make efforts to minimise the risk that the operation of AMEF's programmes could pose by preventing harm through:

- ***Selection and Recruitment:*** Besides necessary technical and social skills, candidates are evaluated based on organizational values like empathy, ability to work in teams and respect for gender and human relationships, made aware and compliant with strict conduct requirements **which include safeguarding measures.**
- ***Leadership and Review Systems:*** Through practising stringent review systems, every staff and consultant is made to recognize vertical (to their reporting Leader) as well as horizontal accountabilities (to each team member). The performances are evaluated not only at individual level but also as teams. Feedback is continuously built into Team review processes. The open review systems are the norm while bilateral reviews are also conducted in case of conflicts. Safeguarding measures would be part of the process. When warranted, special committee appointed by the Board would implement the safeguards.
- Staff are also monitored and strictly guided in dealing with external individual relationships (diverse stakeholders) as well as institutional collaborations so as to ensure that AMEF Vision, Mission and Values are not compromised or diluted

AMEF will maintain robust reporting and follow up mechanisms to address any reports of concerns, incidents and allegations of a safeguarding nature.

- *Complaints mechanism:* Staff, Non staff personnel and consultants may make a confidential report as per the Reporting Procedure below.
- *Timely reporting and response:* All reports of suspicions and allegations of sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, and other forms of harm will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately,
- *Confidential records:* Confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding matters will be logged, maintained and securely stored.
- *Protection for whistleblowers:* Individual(s) who raise or disclose concerns will be protected from retaliation

## **REPORTING**

Individuals should immediately report incidents of actual or suspected sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment relating to this Policy to:

AMEF's Executive Director at

- a ) a secure **email address** ([ed@amefound.org](mailto:ed@amefound.org)) for raising all concerns or
- b) by calling the confidential line of the ED or

c) by writing to: Executive Director, AME Foundation, with the correspondence marked as 'Confidential'. OR in case involving senior leadership could approach:

Chairman, AMEF Board Sub Committee on Safeguarding Measures, at [chairman@amefound.org](mailto:chairman@amefound.org)/AMEF Postal address.

## **INVESTIGATION**

The ED (or the Chairman, AMEF Board Sub committee) would assess whether the complaint pertains to the policy and would identify or formulate a committee (the investigators) to investigate complaint or designate an appropriate external investigator to conduct the investigation in accordance with this Policy as follows:

- The investigator(s) will determine process and timeline but will endeavor to complete the investigation as quickly as practicable within a six-week timeframe from the date the incident was reported.
- Once the investigation is concluded, based on the findings, the ED (or the the Chairman, AMEF Board Sub committee ) will provide any investigation report to the parties for further action, if necessary, as determined at the discretion of AMEF.
- Once an investigation has been completed, and subject to privacy and other legal obligations, the ED (or the Chairman, AMEF Board Sub committee) will notify the reporting individual with the results of the investigation.
- If a complaint indicates that illegal activity has occurred, the ED (or the Chairman, AMEF Board Sub committee) would intimate directly to the relevant law enforcement agencies, as appropriate.
- The above procedure and any investigation carried out is intended to be flexible in order to respond to the specific circumstances at issue. The intent is that a complaint of a safeguarding concern will be managed by a person or committee of people within AMEF who are not personally involved or otherwise in a conflict of interest with respect to the matter, recognising that AMEF is a small organisation with limited human and financial resources. AMEF reserves the right to engage in a different procedure as deemed appropriate in any given circumstance.

## **ACTIONS**

A finding of non-compliance with this Policy by staff, non-staff personnel, consultants may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment in the case of a AMEF staff member and termination of the engagement or contractual arrangements or other appropriate action in the case of non-staff and consultants or as considered appropriate as per code of conduct and disciplinary procedures of AMEF Service Rules. **This would be advised by the Chairman, AMEF Board Sub committee in consultation with Executive Director, AME Foundation.**