



Asian Bridge India (ABI)

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Version – 2025

Effective from 01-08-2025

APPROVED BY:

Board of trustees in its meeting on 28-07-2025

1. Name and Title of the Policy

This document shall be known as the **Asian Bridge India (ABI) Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

2. About Asian Bridge India (ABI)

Asian Bridge India (ABI), founded in 2009 in Varanasi, is a non-profit organization registered under the Indian Trust Act 1882. ABI is committed to empowering vulnerable and marginalized communities, including children, women, youth, Dalits, and sexual minorities. ABI's work is rooted in values of justice, equality, and dignity, as outlined in the Indian Constitution.

Vision: Our vision is to create a world where gender equality is not just an ideal, but a reality. A world where all individuals, regardless of their gender, enjoy the same rights, opportunities, and dignity, free from discrimination, prejudice, and violence.

Mission: Our mission is to advance gender equality and promote the empowerment of all individuals, with a specific focus on youth, women, and marginalized genders.

3. Policy Statement

This policy serves as a guide for ABI staff, consultants, field officials, Teachers, volunteers, interns, institutional partners, and beneficiaries. Its primary purpose is to ensure protection of children and vulnerable adults from any type of harm and also to safeguard ABI staff and the organization itself.

ABI recognizes the vulnerabilities of children and will not tolerate any abuse, neglect, exploitation, harassment, or violation of their rights. This policy is aligned with:

- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**
- **Indian Legal Framework:** (POCSO Act 2012, JJ Act 2015, RTE Act 2009, POSH Act 2013, Child Labour Act 1986, IPC provisions).

ABI affirms that the safety, dignity, and well-being of children are central to all its work.

4. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is to provide a clear framework for ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and rights of children and vulnerable adults associated with programs and operations of ABI. Specifically, this policy aims to:

- **Affirm ABI's Commitment:** Establish and communicate ABI's unwavering commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm.
- **Provide a Preventive and Responsive Framework:** Outline clear measures to prevent harm, promote safe practices, and ensure a prompt, fair, and effective response to any safeguarding concerns or allegations.
- **Define Roles and Responsibilities:** Specify the responsibilities of the Lead Child Protection Officer (LCPO), Child Protection Officers (CPOs), Child Protection Committee (CPC), staff, volunteers, and partners in implementing safeguarding measures.

- **Ensure Legal and Ethical Compliance:** Align ABI's safeguarding practices with Indian laws, including the POCSO Act, Juvenile Justice Act, and relevant provisions of the IPC as well as international standards such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- **Promote a Safe Organizational Culture:** Promote a culture of vigilance, accountability, and respect for the rights and dignity of children and vulnerable adults within all ABI operations and partnerships.

5. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- ABI staff (full-time, part-time, contractual).
- Consultants, interns, and volunteers, teachers, support staff.
- Field officials and non-program staff (drivers, caretakers, etc.).
- Visitors, vendors, and partner organizations engaged with ABI.

It covers all ABI programs, offices, community projects, institutions, and digital/online spaces where children and vulnerable persons interact with ABI.

6. Guiding Principles

ABI's safeguarding and child protection framework is grounded in the following principles:

- **Best Interests of the Child** – In every decision and action, the safety, wellbeing, and rights of the child take precedence over all other considerations.
- **Do No Harm Principle** – All interventions must ensure that children are not further harmed, exploited, or stigmatized in the process of protection.
- **Non-Discrimination** – All children, regardless of gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, disability, socioeconomic background, or any other status, shall receive equal protection and respect.
- **Child Participation and Evolving Capacities** – Children will be given opportunities to express their views freely in matters affecting them, in ways appropriate to their age, maturity, and evolving capacities.

7. Legal Framework in Indian Context

This policy is grounded in the legal protections guaranteed under Indian law. It aligns with the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, which criminalizes all forms of sexual abuse against children and makes reporting mandatory. It further reflects provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, which provides for the care and protection of children in need, and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, which prohibits hazardous work by children. Additionally, it adheres to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, and provisions of the Indian Penal Code that criminalize assault, exploitation, and trafficking. Relevant clauses of the Information Technology Act, 2000, addressing online safety, are also applicable.

9. International Laws and Guidelines

ABI acknowledges and upholds international child rights frameworks, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which recognizes children's right to survival, protection, development, and participation. The institution's policy also reflects

commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16.2, which seeks to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children.

6. Awareness Raising on Policy

Asian Bridge India (ABI) is committed to ensuring that all individuals connected with the organization clearly understand this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and its practical application.

- The policy will be made publicly available on ABI's website, displayed on notice boards at the ABI office, and shared across all project locations and partner institutions.
- All staff (permanent and temporary), management, and consultants will be oriented on the policy.
- Every new and existing staff member will attend a mandatory orientation session on child protection and safeguarding.
- Staff with direct responsibility for child protection, such as Child Protection Officers (CPOs), will undergo specialized training to effectively implement and monitor safeguarding measures.
- Staff, Volunteers, interns, and partner organizations will be required to sign and comply with the ABI Code of Conduct before engaging in ABI programs.
- ABI will also organize awareness sessions for children, youth, parents, and community stakeholders to foster open dialogue, enhance understanding of child safety and rights, and strengthen community-level safeguarding practices.

7. Definitions

Term	Definition	Example
ABI Staff	Full-time, part-time, or contractual staff of ABI	Program Coordinator, Finance Officer, Field Animator etc.
Consultants	Individuals engaged on a professional basis for expertise	Training consultant, technical expert
Volunteers	Individuals providing unpaid support to ABI programs	Volunteer teaching life skills
Non-Program Staff	Support staff at ABI	Driver, caretaker, security staff
Visitors	Guests, donors, or partners visiting ABI projects	Donor agency representatives
Lead Child Protection Officer (LCPO)	Chief Functionary/President of ABI responsible for overall safeguarding	President of ABI
Child Protection Officers (CPOs)	Designated staff responsible at field/project level	Program Manager, Administrative manager
Child Protection Committee (CPC)	A group of senior ABI staff along with an external expert reviewing safeguarding	President, Admin. Head, Senior Project Leads and an external person (not a staff)

7. Prevention and Safe Recruitment Measures

ABI adopts a proactive approach to child safeguarding by ensuring risks are minimized through strict recruitment practices, continuous training, safe program design, and digital monitoring.

7.1 Commitment to Child Safety

- Child safety is a non-negotiable priority in all recruitment and program activities.
- Safeguarding compliance is mandatory for staff, volunteers, consultants, and partner organizations.

7.2 Safe Recruitment Practices

- **Job/Consultancy Advertisements:** Must clearly include safeguarding clauses.
- **Screening & Interviews:** Include questions to assess child safeguarding awareness and attitudes.
- **Reference Checks:** Minimum of two references required.
- **Background Verification:** Police verification for all child-contact and high-risk roles.
- **Self-Declaration & Agreement:** Mandatory safeguarding self-declaration and signed Code of Conduct.
- **Conditional Appointment:** No appointment or engagement without completion of verification and signing of safeguarding commitments.

7.3 Safe Programme Design

- Programs and activities are planned with child-friendly and inclusive approaches.
- Risk assessments are conducted for all child-related activities and environments.
- Child-friendly spaces must meet safety, inclusivity, and accessibility standards.

7.4 Digital/Online Safeguarding

- Monitoring of all online or digital interactions with children.
- No private or unsupervised online communication between staff/volunteers and children.
- Protection of children's personal data, images, and digital records through strict confidentiality and consent protocols.

11. Safeguarding Training

ABI is committed to ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and interns are well-equipped to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. Training initiatives include:

- **Induction Training** – Mandatory for all new staff, volunteers, and interns to familiarize them with ABI's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct, and reporting procedures.
- **Annual Refresher Sessions** – Regular training sessions to reinforce safeguarding knowledge, update staff on legal and procedural changes, and promote best practices.
- **Specialized Training for CPOs** – Child Protection Officers and staff in direct contact with children receive additional training focused on recognizing signs of abuse, handling disclosures, and implementing protective measures.
- **Comprehensive Coverage** – Training programs cover key areas such as child rights, identification of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect), safe online practices, ethical conduct, and clear reporting protocols.

12. Code of Conduct

All persons associated with ABI must strictly adhere to the **Code of Conduct (Annex 01)**.

- **Prohibited:** physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; neglect; exploitation; discrimination; humiliating behaviour; and substance abuse in the presence of children.
- **Expected:** respect, dignity, confidentiality, and timely reporting of any concerns.

The detailed Code of Conduct is provided in Annex 01. Every individual associated with ABI is required to understand and sign this document at the time of engagement with the organization.

13. Reporting and Procedures for Addressing Concerns

ABI is committed to providing a safe and confidential mechanism for reporting any suspicion, allegation, or disclosure of abuse involving children or vulnerable adults. All concerns must be treated seriously and acted upon promptly.

13.1 Who Can Report

- Any child, student, parent, staff member, volunteer, intern, or partner associated with ABI may raise a concern.
- Reports may also be made by third parties who have reasonable grounds to suspect harm or risk of harm.

13.2 How to Report

- Concerns must be reported immediately to the Child Protection Officer (CPO) in person, by phone, or in writing (email, written complaint in the complaint box).
- The CPO will document the concern using ABI's Standard Reporting Form.
- If the designated CPO is unavailable or the concern involves them, the report should be made directly to the Lead Child Protection Officer (LCPO) or a senior authority within ABI.

13.3 Initial Response

- The CPO will ensure the immediate safety of the child or vulnerable adult.
- The concern will be documented and shared confidentially with the LCPO/President.
- The LCPO will decide whether the case requires:
 - Internal resolution (minor issues of conduct), or
 - Referral to statutory authorities (Police, Child Welfare Committee, or other relevant bodies).

13.4 Investigation and Action

- The LCPO will oversee all investigations in line with legal requirements.
- Where necessary, the case will be referred promptly to the Police or Child Welfare Committee.
- Staff, student, volunteers, or others under investigation shall be temporarily suspended during inquiries, ensuring fairness, dignity, and confidentiality.

13.5 Support for Victims

- Victims of abuse will be provided with:
 - Immediate protection and safety measures.
 - Access to counselling and psychosocial support.
 - Assistance with legal and statutory processes, where required.

13.6 Protection of Whistleblowers

- Individuals making genuine reports in good faith will be fully protected from retaliation.
- False or malicious reporting will be investigated and addressed appropriately.

13.7 Confidentiality

- All reports, documents, and investigations will be treated with the strictest confidentiality, shared only with those directly involved in handling the case.

14. Organizational Safeguarding Structure, Roles, and Responsibilities

ABI has a clear safeguarding governance framework to ensure accountability and effective protection of children across all programs and operations.

14.1 Board of Trustees (Board of Trustees)

- Holds final accountability for ABI's safeguarding commitments.
- Approves and reviews the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Receives annual safeguarding reports from the Lead Child Protection Officer (LCPO).

14.2 Lead Child Protection Officer (LCPO) (*President / Chief Functionary of ABI*)

- Provides strategic oversight and ensures full compliance with child safeguarding laws and donor requirements.
- Ensures organizational resources, systems, and capacity-building for safeguarding.
- Receives escalated/high-risk cases from CPOs and reports to the Board of Trustees.

14.3 Child Protection Officers (CPOs) (*Designated staff*)

- Serve as the first point of contact for child protection concerns at all level.
- Receive, record, and monitor all reported cases, ensuring confidentiality and timely follow-up.
- Escalate serious or unresolved cases to the LCPO.
- Provide day-to-day guidance and awareness to staff, volunteers, and community partners on safe practices.

14.4 Child Protection Committee (CPC)

- Composed of senior ABI staff (Program Head/s, HR/Admin Head/s, and one external female member).
- Meets twice a year to:
 - Review reported cases, safeguarding trainings, and policy implementation progress.
 - Recommend improvements to organizational safeguarding practices.
 - Submit an annual safeguarding compliance report to the Board of Trustees.

14.5 Staff and Volunteers

- Must comply with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy at all times.
- Required to follow the Code of Conduct and immediately report any suspected or actual child protection concerns to the designated CPO.

14.6 Partners / Contractors / Consultants

- All contracts and agreements must include safeguarding clauses.
- Partners are responsible for ensuring that their staff adhere to ABI's safeguarding standards and immediately report concerns.

15. Monitoring, Review, and Amendments

15.1 Monitoring of Safeguarding Cases

- All safeguarding cases and their management will be reviewed by the Child Protection Committee (CPC) at least once a year.
- The CPC will assess the effectiveness of responses, adherence to procedures, and any lessons learned to improve future safeguarding practices.
- A summary report of cases, outcomes, and recommendations will be compiled and submitted annually to the Board of Trustees.

15.2 Policy Review

- This policy will undergo a formal review every two years to ensure it remains up-to-date and effective with the changing laws.
- An earlier review may be conducted if there are significant legal, regulatory, or contextual changes that affect safeguarding practices.

15.3 Amendments

- Any amendments to this policy require the approval of the Board of Trustees.
- All approved amendments will be documented, communicated to staff, students' volunteers, and partners, and made publicly accessible through notice boards and the ABI website.

15.4 Continuous Improvement

- Monitoring, review, and amendments are part of ABI's commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring the safeguarding framework remains robust, effective, and responsive to the needs of children and vulnerable adults.

16. Child Protection Committee and its Roles and Responsibilities

The Child Protection Committee (CPC) is responsible for promoting a safe environment for children and vulnerable persons within ABI. It acts as the key body for prevention, monitoring, and response to safeguarding concerns. The Child Protection Committee will consist of the following members:

S. No.	Position	Role/Designation	Appointed by
1	President	Chairperson / Lead Child Protection Officer (LCPO)	–
2	Program Manager	Child Protection Officer (CPO)	Board of Trustees
3	Representative from Field/Program Team	Member	Chairperson
4	External Expert (preferably female, child rights/social work background)	Member	Chairperson

16.1 Responsibilities of the CPC as a Body

- Ensure implementation of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy across all programs and activities of ABI.
- Review and update child safeguarding measures regularly.
- Receive, record, and address any reports or complaints related to child abuse, neglect, or misconduct.
- Ensure timely referral of serious cases to the Board of Trustees and appropriate external authorities as required by law.

- Organize orientation and training sessions for staff, students, and volunteers on child protection and ethical conduct.
- Maintain confidentiality and protect the identity of complainants, survivors, and accused persons during investigations.
- Monitor student engagement in outreach activities to ensure adherence to child safeguarding standards.
- Submit regular safeguarding reports to the Board of Trustees of ABI.

16.2 Roles and Responsibilities of CPC Members

a) Chairperson (LCPO)

- Lead the CPC and ensure effective functioning.
- Convene and preside over meetings.
- Represent the CPC before the Board of Trustees in all safeguarding matters.

b) Child Protection Officer (CPO)

- Act as the primary contact person for reporting child protection concerns.
- Receive complaints, document cases, and initiate the response process.
- Provide guidance and support to children, staff, and students regarding safeguarding issues.

c) Faculty/Staff Representatives

- Monitor safeguarding practices in classrooms, residences, and outreach programs.
- Report any concerns or suspected cases to the CPC promptly.
- Assist in student orientation and awareness sessions.

d) Student Representatives (where appropriate)

- Act as peer support and help raise awareness of safeguarding among fellow students.
- Report issues or concerns from the student community to the CPC.

e) External Member/Advisor

- Provide impartial guidance and expertise on child protection standards.
- Support in handling sensitive or complex cases requiring external intervention.

16. Annexures (Mandatory Documents)

1. Code of Conduct for Staff, Volunteers, and Partners
2. Child Protection Concern Reporting Form (SRF)
3. Consent Forms (photography, travel, medical, data use)
4. Self-Declaration Form for Staff/Volunteers/Consultants
5. Reference Check & Recruitment Verification Format
6. Contact List of LCPO, CPOs, and Emergency Numbers
7. Reporting & Response Flowchart
8. Child-Friendly Version of Policy (simplified for awareness)
9. Safeguarding Training & Orientation Log
10. Annual Safeguarding Compliance Report Template