

SDN Safeguarding Policy

1. Our Commitment:

Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) is dedicated to protecting individuals from harm, abuse, exploitation, and harassment in connection with our work. We strive to maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for our staff, volunteers, consultants, partners, community members, program participants, and anyone else who interacts with SDN. We have a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, child abuse, violence, exploitation, and any other form of abuse or misconduct. Everyone associated with SDN is expected to uphold these standards, acting with dignity, integrity, and respect.

2. Who This Policy Applies To:

This policy applies to all SDN staff, volunteers, interns, consultants, Board members, partners, contractors, service providers, and anyone representing or working on behalf of SDN. It covers conduct related to SDN's work, including:

- Offices and project locations
- Communities and field activities
- Travel, accommodation, and work-related events
- Meetings, training sessions, and workshops
- Digital and online platforms

3. Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment:

SDN strictly prohibits all forms of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Unwanted sexual comments, advances, touching, or other sexual behaviour
- Requests for sexual favours
- Sexual behaviour linked to employment, assistance, opportunities, or other benefits
- Using a position of power, trust, or influence for sexual purposes
- Exchanging money, assistance, employment, services, or other benefits for sexual activity
- Sexually suggestive or explicit communication, images, or materials that are unwanted or inappropriate

SDN acknowledges that an individual's ability to refuse may be affected by power dynamics, age, dependency, or vulnerability. Any abuse of power or trust is strictly prohibited. Sexual activity with a child is forbidden under all circumstances.

4. Child Safeguarding:

SDN is committed to protecting children from abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence. For this policy, a child is defined as anyone under 18. Anyone working with or representing SDN must maintain appropriate professional boundaries when interacting with children and must never engage in any conduct that puts a child at risk of harm, abuse, or exploitation. Any concerns regarding a child's safety or wellbeing encountered through SDN's work must be reported through the organization's safeguarding reporting mechanism.

5. Protection of People at Risk of Harm:

SDN recognises that some individuals may face a higher risk of abuse or exploitation due to their age, gender, disability, circumstances, or relationship with those in positions of authority. SDN will take reasonable measures to ensure that its programs and activities do not expose individuals to avoidable safeguarding risks. Staff and others representing SDN must not exploit relationships of trust, dependency, or authority for personal gain or to the detriment of others.

6. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns:

Anyone who experiences, witnesses, or becomes aware of conduct that may constitute a safeguarding concern involving SDN, its staff, representatives, partners, or activities is encouraged to report it. Safeguarding concerns can be reported to:

- Safeguarding contact: complaints@sdn.ngo
- Alternative contact: info@sdn.ngo

Reports can be made by the individual directly affected or by someone reporting a concern on behalf of another person. If a concern involves someone who would typically receive the report, an alternative reporting channel should be used.

7. Confidentiality and Protection from Retaliation:

SDN will handle safeguarding concerns with sensitivity and confidentiality. SDN will share information only when necessary to address the concern, protect individuals, conduct an appropriate investigation, or comply with legal or safeguarding obligations. SDN does not tolerate retaliation against anyone who raises a safeguarding concern in good faith, supports someone who makes a report, or participates in a safeguarding process.

8. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns:

SDN takes safeguarding concerns seriously and will respond in a way that is fair, proportional, and sensitive to the circumstances. Where appropriate, we may take measures to protect individuals from further harm and facilitate referrals to relevant medical, psychosocial, protection, legal, or law enforcement services. When a safeguarding concern involves a child, the safety and best interests of the child will be the primary consideration in our response.