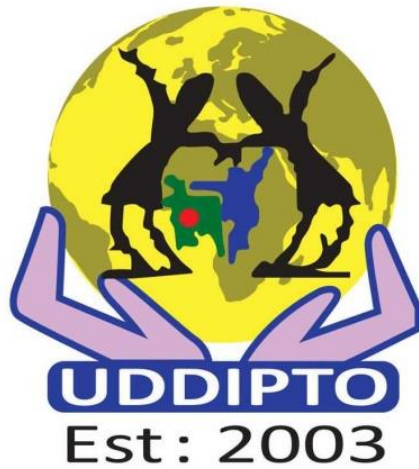


Safeguarding Policy



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Working Definitions

Staff: A person who is employed by Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha(UMUS) on a permanent or temporary basis (including short- term, intern or in any other capacity).

Stakeholder: Any person or individual who is associated with Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha(UMUS) organisational and programmatic operations and activities, General Board of Executive Committees of Advisor Committees, Active Women and Youth Group, members, consultants, vendors, development partners etc.

Harm: An act that causes someone hurt, injury or damage. It can be physical, emotional, or psychological.

Abuse: It is a harmful or morally wrong act which can potentially cause harm to the health, survival, development or dignity of any person. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, or sexual.

Violence: The use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, or another person, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, or psychological harm.

Bullying: It is an act that seeks to harm, intimidate, or coerce someone perceived as vulnerable and weak with the intention to frighten or hurt him/her. Bullying can take place in person or online.

Humiliation: It is the abasement of pride, which creates loss of self-respect, or dignity. An act that induces a feeling of shame or embarrassment in someone.

Discrimination: Discrimination is an unjust or prejudicial treatment of person/s based on, amongst others, sex, race, religion, language, ethnicity, social and/or economic status. It is the practice of treating someone or a group of people less fairly than others in a society.

Exploitation: It is the act of selfishly taking advantage of someone or a group of people in order to profit from them or otherwise benefit oneself.

1. Introduction

Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) is the accredited national chapter of the Berlin-based Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS), the civil society organisation against Women and Dalit Rights led Organization. Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) is committed to ensure that entire staff and stakeholders do not harm to any child or vulnerable adult in the course of organisational or programmatic operations. This is the rationale for the adoption of the Safeguarding Policy. For purposes of this Policy—

- ‘safeguarding’ signifies the protection of children and vulnerable adults against abuse, violence, sexual harassment¹, bullying, humiliation, discrimination and exploitation;
- a child is anyone below the age of 18 years as per the Majority Act of Bangladesh, 1875 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- a vulnerable adult is a person who is unable to protect himself/herself against abuse, harassment, etc. due to old age, infirmity, and disability.

Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha(UMUS) existing policies and guidelines, i.e., Code of Ethics, Gender Policy, Sexual Harassment Complaint & Redress (SHCR) Policy and Human Resource Manual contain provisions that reinforce safeguarding standards as envisaged in this Safeguarding Policy.

Equality, human dignity, and social justice are enshrined in the fundamental principles of the Constitution of Bangladesh. The Constitution also ensures rights that are relevant to the protection of all citizens and prohibition of discrimination [Articles 27, 28(1)]. The Government of Bangladesh has adopted the National Children Policy 2011 with specific provisions that promote the protection of children from all kinds of violence, abuse, and discrimination (Articles 4.2, 4.3 and 6.7). Different international conventions including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to which Bangladesh is a Party, emphasises the rights and dignity of people of all ages. TIB is committed to abide by the laws of the land and obligations under international law.

2. Scope of the Policy

Any person OUTSIDE of Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) staff, management and/or relevant stakeholder(s), irrespective of sex, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, age and other status can invoke this Policy against Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) staff, management and/or relevant stakeholder(s) in case of any harm done to any child or vulnerable adult in or outside the office premises in the course of organisational and programmatic operations.

It is to be noted that all incidents of sexual harassment, which also come under the purview of safeguarding, will be dealt with under the Sexual Harassment Complaint & Redress (SHCR) Policy of Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS).

¹ Please see Scope of the Policy.

3. Objective of the Policy

The Safeguarding Policy aims to identify potential risks of exploitation of children and vulnerable adults who are associated with Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) in some forms and to ensure for them necessary protection from harm.

4. Basic principles underpinning the Safeguarding Policy

- 4.1 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) believes that everyone has an equal right to protection and well-being.
- 4.2 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) practices zero-tolerance against any kind of harm, sexual harassment, and exploitation to protect the dignity and safety of every individual associated with its work.
- 4.3 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) ensures that its programmes and activities are designed and delivered in a manner that do no harm to anyone.
- 4.4 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) ensures that any allegation of harm raised is duly investigated and handled in a just, fair, and sensitive manner in due process.
- 4.5 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) respects confidentiality and is committed to protecting sensitive personal data.
- 4.6 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) promotes an organisational culture that emphasises highest standards of transparency, accountability, responsibility and integrity in its operations and interactions with stakeholders.

5. Code of conduct for staff and relevant stakeholders during interaction with children and vulnerable adults Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha(UMUS) Staff and relevant stakeholders must always-

- 5.1 Ensure that programme activities are designed in ways that do not cause harm to children and vulnerable adults.
- 5.2 Regard and treat children and vulnerable adults with respect and recognise them as individuals with specific needs and rights.
- 5.3 Avoid situations that isolate children and vulnerable adults and where behaviour cannot be observed such as in cars, offices and private homes.
- 5.4 Be aware that physical handling of a child or vulnerable adult, even if done with good intentions, might be misconstrued by observers or the child or the vulnerable adult.
- 5.5 Promote a culture of openness where issues and concerns can be raised and discussed freely.
- 5.6 Set good practice examples of safeguarding for others to follow.

6. Safeguarding roles and responsibilities Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha(UMUS) Staff and relevant stakeholders--

- 6.1 Shall commit to strictly comply with the provisions of the Policy and shall not, in any circumstances, violate Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) Safeguarding Policy. Shall not physically, emotionally, sexually abuse anyone nor harm anyone nor expose them to potential risk of harm and abuse.
- 6.2 Shall never act or behave in a manner that might cause anyone harm or expose them to risk of harm and abuse.
- 6.3 Shall not aid or abet and participate in any activity which is, or may be perceived as discriminatory, illegal, or unsafe.
- 6.4 Shall inform in an appropriate procedure of any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) staff or relevant stakeholders.

➤ **Executive Management Team (EMT) Members**

6.5 Shall be responsible for the effective implementation of this Policy and associated procedures and shall ensure that this Policy is communicated to all staff and stakeholders throughout the organisation.

➤ **Designated/Alternative Safeguarding Officer**

6.6 There shall be a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and an Alternative Safeguarding Officer (ASO) at Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) who shall receive complaints, maintain a risk register, report offenses, raise awareness, document, and disseminate safeguarding concerns, improve and update the Policy as and when applicable.

6.7 DSO/ASO along with Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR & OD) Unit will maintain a database of the number of allegations filed each year, the decisions reached and executed.

➤ **Safeguarding Committee**

6.8 There shall be a Safeguard Committee at Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) consisting of five (5) members from amongst its staff. There shall be one Convener, one Member-Secretary and three (3) Members. The Executive Management Team (EMT) shall form the said Committee.

6.9 A Convener shall be selected by the members from amongst them based on the consensus reached at the first formal meeting. The DSO shall be the Member-Secretary of this Committee. The Committee may, in consultation with EMT, co-opt any other staff from Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) or an external with the necessary expertise.

6.10 In the event of an allegation against any of the members of the Safeguarding Committee, the AGM will nominate another staff to replace him/her to deal with this matter.

6.11 The tenure of the Committee members shall be for a period of Two (2) years from the date of its constitution after which the Committee shall be reconstituted. Members can be re-elected for a maximum of One (1) consecutive terms and members shall be eligible for another Two (2) year term after a gap of at least two (2) years from the date of conclusion of their earlier term.

6.12 Membership of the Committee may be discontinued before the end of the prescribed term upon resignation by member/s or separation or by a decision taken by the AGM, in which case the reason for such a decision must be duly recorded.

6.13 The Committee shall be directly reportable to the Executive Director of Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS). In the event the allegation implicates or lies against the Executive Director, the Committee shall report to the Chairperson, Board of Trustees, Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS).

6.14 The Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) Management shall submit a yearly report of all cases considered by the Committee and the outcomes to the Board.

7. Complaint procedure

- 7.1 a. The complainant or someone on his/her behalf shall file a written complaint to the President/Executive within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the incident or within three (3) months of the incident by providing reasonable grounds for such delay.
- b. In case of complaint made orally (i.e., in person or over phone) the President/Executive shall put that in writing and get it endorsed by the complainant.
- c. The complainant shall not have the right to change the narrative or part thereof once it has been duly filed in accordance with this Policy.
- d. Any staff and/or stakeholder of Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS). who has any concern regarding safeguarding violations or receives a complaint thereof, must inform the President/Executive in writing (e- mail, letter) within forty-eight (48) hours.
- 7.2 On receipt of the allegation, President/Executive shall immediately (no later than 48 hours) present it to the Safeguarding Committee.

8. Investigation process

- 8.1 The Committee shall receive allegation/s, conduct investigation thereon, if applicable and recommend actions as appropriate in accordance with the relevant provisions of Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) existing policies and guidelines.
- 8.2 On receipt of the allegation, the Committee shall gather evidence, proceed for hearing including witness hearing, if applicable and examine its veracity. In addition to oral and documentary evidence, and evidence adduced by the concerned, if any, the Committee will consider other circumstantial evidence in accordance with the applicable rules.
- 8.3 The Committee shall complete the process and prepare its report within thirty (30) working days after receiving the allegation. If considered necessary, the Committee may extend the period, upon consultation with the EMT, up to forty-five (45) working days. The report will comprise of a) findings, b) assessment and analysis of findings, and c) recommended course of action.
- 8.4 The Safeguarding Committee shall maintain utmost confidentiality during the course of its investigation.
- 8.5 The Committee shall finalise the investigation report based on a majority decision.
- 8.6 Based on recommendations of the Committee, final decision shall be taken by the Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS). The Executive Director will communicate the outcome and decision to the parties through the HR & OD Unit of Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) within seven (7) calendar days. Where the allegation lies against the ED, the BoT will communicate the outcome and decision within seven (7) calendar days.
- 8.7 If any breach of the Safeguarding Policy is found, depending on the degree of gravity and seriousness, disciplinary action shall be applicable.
- 8.8 In case of a false/vexatious allegation/complaint, the complainant shall be subjected to disciplinary procedures for gross professional misconduct.
- 8.9 If the complainant or the accused is not satisfied with the decision/action taken by the Committee, s/he may appeal to Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) Ombudsperson within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date when the decision was made known.

9. Risk assessment and mitigation

- 9.1 Potential risks to children and vulnerable adults posed by Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) staff, stakeholders, operations, and programmes shall be reviewed annually.
- 9.2 Necessary measures shall be identified and executed to mitigate such risks. To this end, Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) will maintain a risk register and update it periodically.

10. Safe recruitment and selection

- 10.1 Recruitment & selection and vetting processes for all staff, consultants, partners, interns, vendors, and other stakeholders shall be fully consistent with the Safeguarding Policy.
- 10.2 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) shall clearly communicate about its commitment to safeguarding in job advertisements and procurement announcements.
- 10.3 The job applicant/vendor shall sign/agree a 'Self-Disclosure Form' stating that s/he has not been involved in any crime, illegal act, sexual harassment or abuse of any kind previously and confirm that s/he has read this Policy and if appointed/hired, uphold it fully.
- 10.4 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) shall conduct a thorough verification in terms of the declaration made in accordance to the clause 10.3 above. In appropriate cases, a police verification may be in order.
- 10.5 Candidates/vendors convicted of any crime, including sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse especially against children and/or vulnerable adults shall not be recruited/hired by Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS).
- 10.6 HR & OD Unit and Procurement Unit will ensure that any individual who has been separated from Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) on charges of violation of the Safeguarding Policy is not re-employed or re-hired/re-contracted at Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS).

11. Data protection & social media

- 11.1 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) and its staff, interns, consultants, partners, vendors and relevant stakeholders shall comply with this Policy while using social media, photographs, videos, etc., especially when they involve children, and vulnerable adults. All sensitive personal information shall be treated confidentially.

12. Communications, media and photography Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) shall ---

- 12.1 Never use manipulated, stereotyped or sensationalised text and/or images.
- 12.2 Never use discriminatory or degrading language.
- 12.3 Never use images of inappropriately clothed children and vulnerable adults.
- 12.4 Never feature children and vulnerable adults in reports, publications, websites, social media sites without their consent and the consent of their parents or guardians.
- 12.5 Communications between development partners and children and vulnerable adults during field visits must be monitored to ensure that these interactions are safe.

13. Induction, training and awareness

- 13.1 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) shall provide mandatory induction on the Safeguarding Policy for all new staff, and regularly train the existing staff and relevant stakeholders to ensure adherence to, and effective implementation of the Policy. Refresher sessions shall be undertaken periodically.
- 13.2 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) shall also provide training to key personnel (President/Executive) as well as the Safeguarding Committee members to enable them to facilitate effective safeguarding investigations, specifically on ways to deal with allegation(s) responsibly.
- 13.3 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) shall ensure that the Policy, including the complaint mechanism of safeguarding concerns, are widely communicated in user-friendly language to staff and relevant stakeholders.
- 13.4 Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) shall ensure that the Policy and associated procedures are publicly available on Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) website, common drive, and notice boards in Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) head office.

14. Adoption and review

This Policy was adopted on 03 August 2024 at the EC meeting of the Uddipto Mohila Unnayan Sangstha (UMUS) Board of Trustees to be applicable with immediate effect. Unless warranted more frequently for specific reasons, this Policy will be reviewed and updated at least once in every Two (2) years to accommodate emerging trends/challenges.