



SAFEGUARDS POLICY

April 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Definition of Safeguards Policy

Arab Watch Coalition is committed to the highest ethical standards and opposes all forms of discrimination, marginalization, exploitation, and abuse. We intend to create and maintain a work environment that is safe, productive, and respectful for our colleagues and for all we serve.

The safeguards policy is a living document that would be updated, entirely or partially, every three years, to guarantee best practices.

Application

The safeguards policy should be applied to:

- Member organizations
- Board of Directors
- Executive Team
- Representatives, consultants, volunteers of AWC, and those with whom AWC officially partners to implement its programs.
- All people we interact with, especially vulnerable groups, people with disabilities, and children

When should it be applied?

This policy is to be always applied, including during vacation and outside of work time.

In general, we adhere to this policy in conducting all our activities. We apply these principles when we develop our strategy and plan for our programs to ensure that our plans include risk assessment and mitigation measures. These principles are also included when we hire and train new employees.

Objectives of the Safeguards Policy

The safeguards policy reflects the principles and values of AWC, especially transparency, accountability, and equity.

- Define safeguarding as preventing and responding to harm caused by physical or sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment, or bullying of the people we serve (especially vulnerable adults, people with disabilities, and children).
- Increase understanding of risks and define responsibilities
- Identify mechanisms to ensure commitment to these principles.
- Establish processes for required safeguarding protocols during the recruitment and training of AWC staff members.

- Define processes for AWC members and employees to report concerns regarding suspected safeguarding misconduct to
- Establish standardized processes for investigating and managing reported allegations of safeguarding misconduct; and
- Reinforce AWC's culture of zero-tolerance for violations of these principles.

I. Arab Watch Coalition's Safeguarding Behavior Commitments

Arab Watch Coalition is opposed to any form of discrimination, exploitation, and abuse, for any purpose. We always seek to work without bias and to do no harm to, exploit, or abuse any group

All AWC's representatives commit to respecting and safeguarding the rights and dignity of all people. This includes the following general standards of behavior:

- We will respect, promote, and safeguard the rights and dignity of all people without discrimination or bullying.
- We will not engage in humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior under any circumstances.
- We will not condone, endorse, or participate in any illegal activities conducive to theft, corruption, conflicts of interest, or other activities seeking illegal economic gains.
- We will help to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and safeguards the rights of all people.

In addition, as an organization, Arab Watch Coalition will consider safeguarding principles during strategic and project planning to assess the potential safeguarding risks (especially to vulnerable adults, people with disabilities, and children) that might be associated with our overall operations and project activities.

AWC's Executive Director oversees the implementation of this policy. S/he should share it with all AWC representatives who will be asked to acknowledge it by signing a copy and returning it to the Executive Director.

A. Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) occur when people use their power, or the trust they enjoy, to exploit or abuse others for sexual purposes. All AWC representatives are prohibited from engaging in sexual exploitation or abuse.

All AWC representatives commit to the following safeguarding principles and SEA prevention standards both at work and away from work:

- We will never engage in sexual activity with a child (person under the age of 18) regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- We will never exchange money, employment, or goods for sex, sexual favors, or other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior.
- In addition, AWC will actively support the prosecution of individuals in cases of proven misconduct.

B. Child Protection

Arab Watch Coalition believes that all children, in all circumstances, have the right to feel and be safe and to live free from harm, exploitation, and abuse. Arab Watch Coalition strives to be a child-safe organization by adhering to the following standards:

1. Prevention of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect in all our activities:

- **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person (such as by punching, kicking, burning, etc.). Physical injuries take different forms including bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures. It is not always the case that physical injuries will be visible.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Emotional abuse occurs when persistent ill-treatment of a child affects their self-esteem. This may include name-calling, rejection, threatening, intimidating, or any other acts, which can affect the child's physical and emotional growth and self-esteem.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse occurs when there has been any (or likely) sexual exploitation of a child by an adult. Sexual abuse includes any actual, attempted, or threatened sexual activity involving children.
- **Neglect:** Neglect occurs when a child's basic needs have consistently not been met to the extent that it has a detrimental effect on the child's health and personal development. These basic needs include food, clothing, shelter, and supervision.

Such activities constitute gross misconduct and are grounds for termination of the individual's employment or relationship with Arab Watch Coalition. In addition, a significant failure to report suspicious misconduct will not be tolerated and could result in disciplinary consequences, up to termination of the relationship with AWC.

2. Proactive child protection:

AWC will design its programs and execute its mission in alignment with the following standards:

We will work to ensure that personal dignity, respect, and safety for children are maintained through all projects, programs, and departments by applying different measures including, but not limited to:

- Limiting unsupervised interactions with children.
- Prohibiting exposure to pornography; and
- Complying with high standards, applicable laws, regulations, or customs- whether national or international ones (whichever gives greater protections)- regarding the photographing, filming, or other image-generating activities of children,

C. Respect the rights of people with disabilities

Arab Watch Coalition is committed to promoting an inclusive work environment that recognizes and accommodates the special needs of people with disabilities and adheres to the principles of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

1. We prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities and guarantee equal opportunities for people with disabilities in membership, employment, contracting, and partnering.
2. We will provide adequate accommodation for people with disabilities among our staff, members, and partners.
3. We will consider people with disabilities safeguarding in project planning and implementation to determine potential risks to people with disabilities associated with the project activities and operations.
4. We will ensure that personal dignity and respect for people with disabilities are maintained through all projects and programs.

D. Prohibition of Pornography

AWC expressly prohibits all its representatives from accessing, possessing, or circulating pornographic content using AWC computers, AWC email accounts, AWC-related electronic distribution lists, or an internet connection paid for by AWC. This includes sharing emails or group texts (including jokes).

E. Human Trafficking and Forced Labor

Arab Watch Coalition expressly prohibits forced labor (sometimes referred to as “modern slavery”) As a result, AWC will never:

- Solicit a person for employment using materially false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises regarding that employment.
- Charge staff recruitment fees; or
- Provide or arrange accommodation for staff, or partners, when traveling for AWC work, that fails to meet reasonable safety standards.

II. Addressing Safeguarding Misconduct

A. Reporting potential misconduct

All AWC representatives (especially the Executive Team) are expected to report potential safeguarding misconduct.

1. AWC protects survivors and individuals who report misconduct from retaliation, bullying, or any retaliation threat.
2. Any person who engages in retaliation will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. (*Note: submission of false allegations is considered a violation of this policy and will be handled accordingly.*)
3. Failure to make a timely report of, or cover-up, potential safeguarding misconduct will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment
4. Any AWC representative who receives a safeguarding complaint or has knowledge or reasonable suspicion of safeguarding misconduct (whether by an AWC representative or another affiliated worker) must immediately notify the supervisor who oversees the project or activities within which the potential misconduct occurred. If they have reasons to believe that the supervisor might be involved in the misconduct or feel significantly uncomfortable sharing their concerns with the supervisor, they should notify a higher-level authority at AWC. The supervisor should notify the Executive Director, or a Board member in case the Director may be involved in the misconduct.
5. The Executive Director (or the Board member if the Executive Director is involved in the reported misconduct) should record the complaint in writing within 48 hours and start the investigation process following the procedures described in the following section.

B. Procedures to address the complaint

Above all else, Arab Watch Coalition's protocols for dealing with complaints, including potential safeguarding misconduct, focus on keeping the survivor and the informant safe and minimizing harm.

1. The Executive Director (or the Board in case the Executive Director is involved in the misconduct, or in case the complaint is against a Coalition member where the articles of the bylaws would be followed) should form an investigation committee. The selected members of the investigation committee should be independent from the received allegation, and free from the appearance or existence of bias or conflict of interest. They should also have expertise in dealing with the subject of the complaint.
2. The Investigation Committee assesses the complaint to verify its merit and the provided evidence if any. The committee consults with the informant and or the survivor to ensure their safety throughout the process.
3. Based on the assessment, the Committee may decide that the complaint is not serious and not eligible for investigation, refer it to the local authority if they suspect illegal activities, or proceed with the investigation.

1. In case of investigation, the committee commits to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved and to not disclose or discuss the case with anyone other than those who have a legitimate need to know the details of the case.
4. The Committee submits the investigation report to the Executive Director, or to the Board in case the Executive Director is involved in the misconduct, or in case the complaint was against a Coalition's member as per the bylaws.
5. The Executive Director or the Board will provide the survivors with periodic updates, ensure their safety throughout the investigation, and give them access to the investigation report when completed.
6. All documents related to the complaint, the initial assessment, and the investigation should be saved with the Executive Team.

D. Management remediating actions:

Upon receipt of the investigation report, the Executive Team, or the Board in case the Executive Director was involved in the misconduct, will promptly initiate any necessary remediating actions related to investigation findings, including but not limited to:

1. **Internal disciplinary procedures:** If the investigation confirms the allegations of safeguarding misconduct, AWC will discipline the person who engaged in the safeguarding violation. Disciplinary measures will be proportionate to the findings and range from warning up to the termination of the relationship with the Coalition.
2. **Pursuing legal recourse:** In instances where a violation of local law may have been committed, AWC will consult with appropriate local legal counsel. If the legal consultant confirms an illegal action might have been committed, AWC will support or pursue appropriate legal recourse.
3. **Other internal remediating activities:** AWC's senior management (and Board where applicable) will be responsible for ensuring Arab Watch Coalition promptly implements all necessary improvements to any processes or mechanisms to prevent or reduce future occurrences of safeguarding misconduct.

Appendix A: Individual Acknowledgment

This Safeguarding Policy describes the Arab Watch Coalition’s commitment to oppose all forms of discrimination, exploitation, and abuse (especially of beneficiaries, vulnerable adults, persons with disabilities, and children). I acknowledge that I have read and reviewed the requirements contained in the policy and agree that I will follow them.

I further commit to report any suspected safeguarding misconduct and to help to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse, safeguards the rights of colleagues, and community members (especially vulnerable adults, persons with disabilities, and children), and promotes the implementation of Arab Watch Coalition’s Ethics. *(Note: Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.)*

I understand that I should consult with the Human Resources department regarding any questions not answered in this policy.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE RECEIVED: _____

NAME: _____

RELATIONSHIP WITH AWC (choose one)

- Staff member
- Board member
- Coalition member
- Contractor for service provision (contracted consultants)
- Representative of an implementing partner organization