

The SheDecides Support Unit (SDSU) is hosted by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) Central Office and aligned with its various policies and procedures.

This Safeguarding Policy is drawn from IPPF's Policy Handbook

SHEDECIDES SAFEGUARDING POLICY
(CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS)

Introduction

1. SheDecides believes that everyone we come into contact with has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation, regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, race, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, partnership status, pregnancy or parental status, disability, health or any other analogous personal status.
2. SheDecides will not tolerate abuse or exploitation by any staff or the SheDecides community including but not limited to Champions, SheDecides movements, Guiding Group members, young leaders, partners, donors, volunteers and contractors.
3. SheDecides recognises that the right to be free from abuse, exploitation and harassment is enshrined in international human rights law namely [ICERD](#), [ICCPR](#), [ICESCR](#), [CEDAW](#), [CAT](#), [CRC](#), [CRPD](#).¹ SheDecides additionally recognises that sexual exploitation and abuse are a form of gender-based violence.
4. SheDecides' commitment to ensuring bodily autonomy for all includes a commitment to freedom and protection from harm.
5. SheDecides believes that creating a safe environment for all children, adolescents, young people and vulnerable adults requires the cooperation of everyone in the Movement. The focus on youth lies at the core of the SheDecides' movement. It is the responsibility of all to raise any safeguarding concerns they have or that are reported to them.
6. SheDecides commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through prevention, reporting and response.

Purpose and Scope

7. The purpose of this policy is to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation that may be caused due to their coming into contact with SheDecides through:
 - i. The conduct of everyone in and associated with the Movement;
 - ii. The design and implementation of SheDecides' programmes and activities.

¹ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, inhuman or Degrading treatment or Punishment, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

8. This policy does not cover Safeguarding concerns in the wider community not caused by SheDecides or anyone associated with SheDecides.
9. SheDecides will only engage with other organizations that come in contact with children and vulnerable adults if they agree with the standards and principles of this Safeguarding Policy and procedures. SheDecides engagement with organizations may be withdrawn if it becomes apparent that such standards and principles are not being upheld.

Definition

10. In this policy, safeguarding refers to SheDecides commitments to protect all children, adolescents and vulnerable adults from harm arising from coming into contact with SheDecides.
11. This policy also applies to SheDecides's programme participants.² SheDecides recognizes that programme participants can be exposed to abuse of authority and, as such, can be considered vulnerable in relation to their dealings with SheDecides. This recognition does not imply that programme participants are generally to be regarded as vulnerable and is intended solely to ensure that SheDecides is comprehensive in its safeguarding duties.
12. The terms "victim" and "survivor" as used in this policy refer to individuals who may have been subject to abuse or exploitation. The use of these terms does not indicate that anyone suspected of having been involved in that abuse or exploitation is to be regarded as guilty. Further definitions relating to safeguarding are provided in the glossary below.

Guiding Principles

13. *Empowerment* – decisions will be survivor (victim) led in that they will, wherever possible, be based on the informed consent of adult survivors (victims),³ and will respect the views of survivors (victims) who are children or adults who are unable to give informed consent. SheDecides will endeavour to ensure that all its communications with survivors (victims) are in an appropriate language and format.
14. *Prevention* – It is better to take action before harm occurs. SheDecides recognises the key role that prevention has in safeguarding and will ensure it develops and facilitates activities which keep people safe from abuse and exploitation. This includes applying a safeguarding lens to promotional communications and fundraising activities and facilitating training and support in recognising abuse.
15. *Protection* – Abusive behaviour in any environment is never accepted. Anyone in the SheDecides movement will organise activities in a manner that does not diminish their safeguarding responsibilities. SheDecides will have clear channels to enable reporting in a confidential and anonymous (if required) basis. SheDecides will respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns and provide support and representation to survivors (victims).

² A SheDecides programme participant is someone who receives a service from SheDecides or takes part in SheDecides activities

³ SheDecides understands that the rights and protections guaranteed to people under the age of 18, as a matter of international and national law, sometimes differ from the rights of adults. These differences relate to all aspects of human rights but require particular approaches in regard to sexual rights. SheDecides begins from the premise that persons under the age of 18 are rights holders, and that at different points within the spectrum of infancy, childhood, and adolescence, certain rights and protections will have greater or lesser relevance

16. *Accountability* – SheDecides will act with integrity, follow due process and be transparent and accountable in relation to its safeguarding activities and IPPF will include anonymous safeguarding data in its annual reporting. SheDecides acknowledges that, whilst everyone has responsibility for safeguarding, the IPPF Board of Trustees and Director-General are ultimately accountable for ensuring a safeguarding culture exists at IPPF including SheDecides as a hosted initiative.

Implementation

17. The SheDecides Support Unit, supported by IPPF Safeguarding teams, shall be available to advise and support this work.
18. SheDecides Support Unit staff will:
- i. Ensure adherence with the IPPF incident management and reporting procedure.
 - ii. Ensure all breaches of the Safeguarding Policy are dealt with appropriately and recorded and stored securely with restricted access; and as, required, may be shared with the IPPF Director General.
19. The SheDecides community will:
- i. Be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding children, vulnerable adults and programme participants;
 - ii. Be up to date on local child protection and safeguarding vulnerable adults legislation and responsibilities;

Prevention

20. SheDecides Support Unit staff will:
- i. Have access to, be familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this Policy and the Code of Conduct as well as their rights and responsibilities to report concerns related to safeguarding that they experience, witness themselves or which someone else discloses to them.
 - ii. Design and undertake all programs and activities in a way that protects children, vulnerable adults and programme participants from any risk of harm that may arise from coming into contact with SheDecides. Contact includes the way in which information about individuals in programmes is gathered and communicated, and using risk assessments;
 - iii. Receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the Movement but, at a minimum, ensure that all are aware that abuse, neglect and exploitation are not to be tolerated and that all concerns will be recorded and taken seriously, and are also aware of how any such concerns may be reported and to whom;
 - iv. Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel;

21. SheDecides community will:

- i. Have access to, be familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this Policy and the Code of Conduct
- ii. Design and undertake all programs and activities in a way that protects children, vulnerable adults and programme participants from risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with SheDecides. This includes the way in which information about individuals in programmes is gathered and communicated, and using risk assessments;
- iii. Receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the the Movement but, at a minimum, ensure that all are aware that abuse, neglect and exploitation are not to be tolerated and that all concerns will be recorded and heard, and are also aware of how any such concerns may be reported and to whom;
- iv. Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of this Policy.

Reporting

22. SheDecides Support Unit staff will:

- i. Ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns in the form of IPPF SafeReport are made available and promoted to the SheDecides community;
- ii. Provide protection to anyone reporting concerns or complaints [through IPPF SafeReport](#) in line with IPPF's whistleblowing/complaint policies;
- iii. Ensure that concerns that staff become aware of are reported to [IPPF SafeReport](#) as soon as possible to enable Charity Commission and donors to be alerted where necessary.

23. The SheDecides Community will:

- i. Ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns in the form of IPPF SafeReport are made available and within the SheDecides community;
- ii. Report any safeguarding related concerns including by a SheDecides Support Unit staff member or associated personnel to [IPPF SafeReport](#)

Response

24. SheDecides Support Unit staff will:

- i. Follow up on safeguarding reports and concerns promptly and according to this Policy and procedures, and local legal and statutory obligations;
- ii. Ensure a proportionate response is undertaken, including investigation where warranted is undertaken. The proportionate actions will be assessed at the Incident Triage stage and staff will bring in experts to triage assessments where this expertise is not available within the Support Unit.
- iii. Whatever response is decided as appropriate and proportionate, decisions and actions will be progressed swiftly and will be made having considered SheDecides policies, risk assessment of the situation and most importantly, with the safety, wellbeing and wishes of the survivor (victim) central to the response.
- iv. Apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of either the Safeguarding (Children & Vulnerable Adults) Policy or the Code of Conduct;

- v. Ensure that responses are survivor (victim) focused, keeping the needs of the survivor (victim) at the forefront of any investigation process;
- vi. Offer support to survivors (victims) of harm caused by staff or anyone associated with SheDecides, regardless of whether a formal investigation is carried out. A list of local organizations and contacts offering support must be made available to survivors (victims) (or, in the case of children, to their parent or guardian) which should include, but not be limited to, information about legal, counselling, medical and psychosocial support. Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor (victim);
- vii. Ensure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the incident and subsequent case management should be shared on a need-to-know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times, in line with IPPF's Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy. Confidentiality should prioritize the survivor rather than the alleged perpetrator and must never be used as an excuse for not responding to a concern;
- viii. Ensure regular review and learning from safeguarding incidents.

Glossary

Adolescents

According to the [UN](#), adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10-19.

Abuse

Abuse is defined as all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse or commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to health, survival, development or dignity which arises within a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affords special rights and protections to all those under the age of 18. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'children' is used to refer to those under the age of 18.

Confidentiality

References to obligations of confidentiality are references to the need to protect confidential information from unauthorized disclosure. Confidential information is information which is not common knowledge and which has some privacy value. This includes personally identifiable information as well as sensitive documents. Confidential information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis, i.e. it is shared only where there is a justification that the person needs to know in order to perform their role.

Exploitation

Actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the exploitation of another. This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.

Harm

Psychological, physical and any other infringement of an individual's rights.

Neglect

Neglect is defined to include deliberate or negligent failure to attend to an individual's needs which results in actual or potential harm to health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

Psychological or emotional abuse

This can include, but is not limited to, humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.

Safeguarding

For SheDecides, *Safeguarding in general* means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. It means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, from occurring; to protect people in contact with SheDecides, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

This definition pays specific attention to preventing and responding to harm from any potential, actual or attempted abuse of power, trust, or vulnerability, especially for sexual purposes.

Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults (SCVA)

For SheDecides, *Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults* specifically refers to the prevention of all forms of abuse and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults. It includes the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).³⁸ Safeguarding puts programme participants and affected persons at the centre of all we do.

Safeguarding obligations apply consistently and without exception across the SheDecides community and staff. They require the proactive identification and prevention of, and guarding against, all risks of harm, exploitation and abuse and the creation and maintenance of mature, accountable and transparent systems for responding to, reporting and learning from risks which materialize. Those systems must be survivor-centred and must also give appropriate protection to those accused prior to any determination of guilt.

Sexual abuse

Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual exploitation

Actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.

Survivor

The person who has been abused or exploited. The term survivor is often used in preference to victim as it implies strength, resilience and the capacity to survive, however it is the individual's choice how they wish to identify themselves.

Vulnerable Adult (At Risk) Adult

A vulnerable adult, sometimes also referred to as an "at risk" adult, is someone who may be unable to take care of or protect themselves from harm or exploitation by reason of factors such as, for example, gender, mental health issues, learning or physical disabilities, age or sexual orientation.

The term may also be used to refer to someone whose vulnerability is the result of their situation rather than any inherent factor. This may include someone whose vulnerability is a result of the impact of natural disaster or conflict. It is also used for the purpose of SheDecides policies and procedures to refer to SheDecides programme participants.³⁹ This approach is taken in recognition of the fact that SheDecides programme participants can be exposed to abuse of authority and, as such, can be considered vulnerable in relation to their dealings with SheDecides. It does not imply that programme

³⁸ Refers to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations by staff or associated personnel. The term derives from the United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

³⁹ A SheDecides programme participant is someone who receives a service from SheDecides or takes part in SheDecides activities

participants are generally to be regarded as vulnerable and is intended solely to ensure that SheDecides is comprehensive in its safeguarding duties.

Young Person

For the purposes of its own programmatic work and data collection, IPPF, in line with the UN, defines young people as everyone aged 10 to 24. SheDecides governance manual considers a young person to be a person under the age of 30, including adolescents.