# Safeguarding

**Guidelines and principles for protection against exploitation, abuse and harassment, as well as reporting and follow-up on cases of exploitation, abuse and harassment**

## 1. Intro and definitions

Ghana Friendship's local partners in Ghana have had guidelines for safeguarding since 2019 and Ghana Friendship wants to follow the partners' example and has therefore developed these guidelines and principles for how the organization in its work can ensure that adults, young people and children are protected against exploitation, abuse and harassment. The document also outlines how it is possible to report a case of exploitation, abuse or harassment, as well as how Ghana Friends follows up on the report.

The safeguarding guidelines were developed and approved by the Board in May 2023. It is a dynamic document that must be regularly revisited and updated. The document is written in Danish, as it is the language that is generally communicated internally in the organisation. This should help to ensure that Ghana Friendship's members, volunteers and employees are aware of the guidelines for safeguarding and act in accordance with them. To give partners and other international collaborations access to the guidelines, the document has been translated into English.

" Safeguarding " is a broad concept that can be difficult to translate directly into Danish and therefore Ghana Friends’ guidelines for safeguarding have the sub-heading "protection against exploitation, abuse and harassment". In the past, organizations' safeguarding policies most often covered children and dealt largely with sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.[[1]](#footnote-1) In recent years, safeguarding policies and guidelines have become more widespread, which include both children and adults and which deal with protection against exploitation and abuse of a sexual, as well as physical, psychological and emotional nature.

For Ghana Friends, safeguarding concerns the responsibility the organization has to ensure that members, volunteers and employees, projects and programs do not harm children, young people and adults with whom we work. Safeguarding is ensuring that partners, members, volunteers and employees are not themselves exposed to exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Specifically, this means that Ghana Friends’ members, volunteers and employees must not :

* Engage in sexual relations with program and project staff, partners or the local population who benefit from our efforts and work, or exchange cash, goods or services for sexual favors.
* Expose program and project staff, partners or local population to physical or psychological abuse.
* Engage in private commercial activities with program and project staff, partners, local people that can create financial profit for the GV member, volunteer or employee.
* Expose children to or support child labor in regards to their association with the organization and its work.[[2]](#footnote-2)

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure that children, young people and adults who work with and in Ghana Friends are protected from harm in the form of exploitation, abuse and harassment in connection with their association with the organization and its work.

Ghana Friendship has increased responsibility in relation to protecting vulnerable groups and individuals against any form of exploitation, abuse and harassment. Vulnerable and exposed groups and persons cover e.g. children, young people, girls and young women, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people, as well as ethnic and religious groups defined as being a minority.

## 3. Who is covered of Ghana Friendship guidelines for safeguarding?

These safeguarding guidelines include:

1. Members, volunteers and staff of Ghana Friends.
2. Persons carrying out work for Ghana Friends, including consultants, journalists and filmmakers and others visiting the program/projects or partners in Ghana.

Ghana Friends’ Ghanaian partners have their own safeguarding policies. It is primarily Ghana Friends’ partners in Ghana who are in direct contact with the local population, and it is therefore crucial that there is agreement between Ghana Friends’ guidelines for safeguarding and the partners' guidelines for safeguarding.

## 4. Principles

Ghana Friends safeguarding guidelines follow 4 principles:

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| **PREVENTION**  Prevention of exploitation, abuse and harassment is a shared responsibility. All members, volunteers and staff are responsible for their actions and behaviour. Everyone can play a vital role in preventing and responding to exploitation abuse or harassment by reporting it and supporting the victim. | **ZERO TOLERANCE**  Exploitation, abuse and harassment are unacceptable. Ghana Friends has zero tolerance towards any form of exploitation, abuse or harassment. |
| **SECURITY, PRIVACY AND SECURITY**  Ghana Friends will respond to incidents of exploitation, abuse and harassment, prioritizing the rights and needs of the victim while ensuring a fair investigation for all parties. The victim's privacy and confidentiality must be protected to the greatest extent possible in accordance with applicable legislation. In some cases, it may be necessary to disclose some information or facts to external parties involved in the investigation or support process. | **A HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION**  Ghana Friends is committed to ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace built on the standards of respect, equality and fair treatment. The working environment must be healthy and supportive for both members and volunteers as well as employees. |

## 5. Prevention , reporting and follow up

**5.1 Prevention:**

Ghana Friends’ Board and secretariat will, through ongoing communication and dialogue, do their utmost to ensure that members, volunteers, employees and people who carry out work for Ghana Friends are made aware of their responsibilities within Ghana Friends’ guidelines for safeguarding. It is the responsibility of Ghana Friends to:

* Ensure that all employees, volunteers, consultants and partners know the guidelines and their responsibilities.
* Design and implement programs, projects and other activities in a way that, to the best of our ability, protects individuals from any risk of exploitation, abuse and harassment.

**5.2 Reporting:**

A person who, under Ghana Friends’ auspices, is or has been subjected to exploitation, abuse and harassment - e.g. in the form of psychological harassment, physical violence or sexual assault - or who have experienced that other people have been exposed to exploitation, abuse and harassment, must feel sure that a report can be made anonymously and will be taken seriously. If volunteers or employees receive notification of a complaint from a third party, it is the responsibility of the volunteers and employees to ensure that the report is treated confidentially and in accordance with the described procedures. Ghana Friends accepts reports from both internal and external sources.

Following an inquiry regarding exploitation, abuse and harassment, a thorough investigation will take place and the necessary measures will be taken by Ghana Friends. Reporting must be done on the Ghana Friends website.

Description of procedure for reporting exploitation, abuse and harassment:

* Contact via form at [www.ghanavenskab.dk](http://www.ghanavenskab.dk) . It is important that Ghana Friends can get in touch with the person reporting and therefore contact details must be provided. This information will be treated as strictly confidential.
* A reply to the inquiry can be expected within 72 hours and in this connection the complainant will be informed about the process for processing the complaint.
* The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and any recommendations as soon as possible.

**5.3 Follow-up:**

Ghana Friends is responsible for the follow-up of any report or complaint regarding exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Ghana Friends is aware that in a small organization it is difficult to find neutral and independent persons in the organization, but will do everything to minimize the danger of power relations and bias negatively affecting the response to any complaint. We try to counter this by ensuring that the people who investigate the complaint are impartial.

Complaints are received and dealt with in the first instance by two selected members of the Board, who are responsible for the complaint being dealt with in accordance with the guidelines.

**5.4 Consequences of breaching Ghana Friendship's safeguarding guidelines**

Violation or violation of the provisions and intent of Ghana Friends’ safeguarding guidelines will be met with reactions commensurate with the nature, extent and severity of the violation. It can range from recommendations to demands and actual sanctions, such as disciplinary measures in the form of warning/dismissal/expulsion, suspension of membership, immediate termination of contractual relations and police report in criminal matters.

**5.5 Reporting/information partners and donors**

In the event that reports or complaints concern one of Ghana Friends’ local partner organizations in Ghana, these must first be reported to the partner organization in accordance with the protocols in the partner's safeguarding guidelines. The partners are obliged to inform Ghana Friends about major matters. In the event of serious violations of Ghana Friends’ safeguarding guidelines, Ghana Friends will report to the CISU.

1. The CISU in their Code of Conduct (Feb 2022) uses the wording SHEA on sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and refers to the UN definitions:

   * **Sexual Exploitation:** Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power inequality or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to making money, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
   * **Sexual abuse**: Actual or threatened physical behavior of a sexual nature, either by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. GV refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF's definition of child labour, see e.g. <https://www.unicef.dk/fakta-til-opgaven/fakta-om-boernearbejde/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)