



# SAFEGUARDING POLICY



**TEZPUR SOCIAL SERVICE SOCIETY (TSSS)**

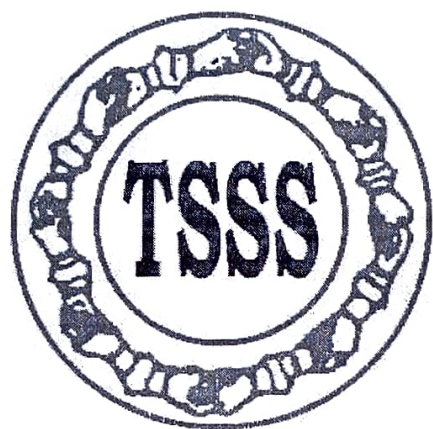
**Registered HQ**

Bishop's House, Tezpur, Sonitpur District, Assam - 784 001

**Operational HQ**

Dholaibil, Sonitpur, Assam - 784 182

# SAFEGUARDING POLICY



## Tezpur Social Service Society

GB approved: 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Review Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March 2027

---

### Applies to:

*All staff, interns, volunteers, sub-recipients, implementing partners, suppliers, service providers, visitors (worldwide), donors, beneficiaries, consultants, and board members*

---

### Registered Headquarters

Bishop's House, Tezpur – 784 001  
Assam, India

### Operational Headquarters

Dholaibil, Sonitpur, Assam - 784182  
Email: [tssstezpur9@gmail.com](mailto:tssstezpur9@gmail.com)  
Website: [tsss.org.in](http://tsss.org.in)







**TSSS BELIEVES:**

That treating others with dignity and respect entails treating others as worthy. This is a very holy concept, as all humans are deserving of a certain baseline of dignity, protection, provision, and acknowledgement. Every religion teaches that we have the same dignity, honor, value, and worth that he does, and if we recognize that each member of his body shares equal dignity, honor, value, and worth, we will treat each other.

In our workplace, we meet many children and adults who are potentially at risk for a variety of reasons. Tezpur Social Service Society (TSSS) aims to create a safe environment in which no child or adult will experience harm or exploitation during their contact with us. We will abide by the relevant rules with regard to Government compliances and its laws where reasonably practicable and as well as ensuring local legal compliance.

**TSSS IS COMMITTED TO:**

1. Respect every male and female child, Adults of all castes, religions, languages, and the social customs of each one's dignity.
2. Valuing, respecting, and listening to children and adults, maintaining confidentiality, and acting proportionately.
3. Maintaining strong protection systems, procedures, and minimising and managing situations where abuse could occur through planning, risk assessment, and safeguarding systems.
4. Sharing safeguarding best practice and information regarding safeguarding concerns with relevant parties and involving children and adults where appropriate
5. Actively investigating suspected abuse, such as all forms of harassment, exploitation, including all forms of sexual harassment, and human trafficking.
6. We require all staff to ensure their behavior is consistent with this policy. We also require that clients, customers, partners, and suppliers be made aware of this policy and operate within it. We will provide adequate and appropriate resources to implement this policy and will ensure it is communicated throughout the organization and understood by all staff





7. The Governing Body of TSSS will review this important policy statement annually to reflect new legal and regulatory requirements.

#### **THE SCOPE OF SAFEGUARDING POLICY:**

8. The TSSS's Safeguarding Policy applies to all the Tezpur Social Service Society (**TSSS**) staff, including board members, and "affiliates", which includes interns and volunteers.
9. The policy guarantees that partners, service providers, and suppliers adhere to safeguarding requirements to prevent incidents and take necessary actions against wrongdoers.
10. The TSSS Safeguarding Policy is applicable and binding regardless of geographical location, contractual status, administrative independence of a subsidiary entity, or local context.
11. This policy applies to TSSS staff and affiliates' activities and behaviors at work, outside work, and while on leave.

#### **DEFINITION OF SAFEGUARDING**

12. TSSS defines Safeguarding as its responsibility to ensure that our staff and programs honor and protect the rights and dignity of all people, especially children and vulnerable adults, to live free from abuse and harm. This responsibility is codified in our Safeguarding Policy, which sets clear standards for TSSS staff, Board Members, affiliates, and those with whom we work – partners, suppliers, and service providers – regarding their obligations to respect all people and to actively prevent harassment, abuse, and exploitation, including all forms of sexual harassment and human trafficking. The persons included in the scope of this policy are obligated to protect those who work for us, those with whom we work, and those whom we serve.

#### **PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

##### **Harassment**

13. General harassment is unwanted, unwelcome, and uninvited behavior that demeans, threatens, or offends and results in a hostile environment. Harassment is typically targeted at an individual or a particular group of individuals. This includes, but is not limited to,



harassment based on ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry, disability, medical condition, marital status, or veteran status.

14. General harassment is not sexual and may consist of verbal or physical conduct that insults or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual or group of individuals. Some examples of conduct that may constitute harassment (but not limited to) are: (a) the use of derogatory statements, or abusive words or phrases, jokes, unwelcome pranks, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threatening, and other intimidating or hostile acts (b) written or graphic material that insults, stereotypes or shows aversion or hostility towards an individual or group and that is placed on walls, bulletin boards, email, voicemail, or elsewhere on the TSSS's premises, or circulated in the workplace; and (c) a display of symbols, slogans, or items that are associated with hate or intolerance towards any select group.

### **Bullying**

15. Bullying, defined as persistent and repeated mistreatment of one or more targeted persons by one or more perpetrators and includes (but is not limited to) threats; intimidation; public humiliation/name-calling; persistent and unwelcome teasing; abuse or use of power to undermine, humiliate or denigrate; intentional work interference/sabotage; or stalking. While harassment is usually based on protected characteristics and may be easier to spot, bullying can occur to anyone and may be more subtle and cumulative.

### **Sexual Harassment**

16. Sexual harassment can cross age and gender boundaries and may include unwelcome sexual advances; request for sexual favor; verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature; or any other behavior of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected/perceived to cause offense or humiliation to another and when such conduct interferes with work; is made a condition of employment; or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment can be verbal, physical, or visual. It includes actions directed at an individual or actions observed by an individual.







- a. Verbal sexual harassment: includes requests of a sexual nature made by one person to another. When from a supervisor or superior, these requests may demand or imply a condition of employment or compensation, either implicitly or explicitly, or when an employment decision is based on an individual's acceptance or rejection of such conduct. When such requests are from TSSS staff to a partner or supplier staff, these requests may imply a condition of continued cooperation, commercial or otherwise.
- b. Physical sexual harassment: includes unwanted or inappropriate leering or touching of any kind, unwelcome sexual advances. Stalking may also be associated with sexual harassment.
- c. Visual sexual harassment: includes the sharing or posting of images that create an offensive, hostile, or intimidating environment or interfere with an individual's job performance. Examples include—but are not limited to—displays of sexually explicit or demeaning materials such as offensive pictures, cartoons, symbols, or items in the workplace.

### **Exploitation**

17. Exploitation is the use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person.

### **Forms of exploitation**

18. **Sexual Exploitation** is any actual or attempted abuse of 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.
19. **Child Labor** is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to a child's physical or mental development. It is work that can be mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children. It is work that interferes with their schooling by:



- a. Depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
- b. Obliging them to leave school prematurely;
- c. Requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

**20. TSSS staff and affiliates are prohibited from hiring children under the age of 15 or below 18 or a minor. Regardless of any perceived benefit to the child or family, and prohibited from funding programs in which child labor, as defined above, is occurring. Hazardous work is prohibited for all children, including children aged 15-17 years. This includes construction and manufacturing work.**

### **Abuse**

**21. Abuse is a deliberate act of ill treatment that can harm a person's safety, well-being, dignity, and development. It often involves individuals who have a relationship of responsibility and care for the victim, including project staff, parents, guardians, teachers, community workers, health-care providers, religious leaders, friends, or other children.**

### **Forms of abuse:**

- 22. Sexual Abuse:** actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
- 23. Physical Abuse:** Non-accidental use of physical force that inadvertently or deliberately causes a risk of or actual injury or suffering. Physical force includes but is not limited to hitting, shaking, kicking, pinching, pushing/pulling, grabbing, burning, female genital mutilation, torture, and other physical acts.
- 24. Emotional Abuse:** Harm done by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection, such as degrading punishments, threats, bullying, and not giving care and affection, resulting in adverse effects on the behavior and emotional state of an individual or the behavior and development of a child or young person.
- 25. Neglect/Negligent Treatment:** Allowing for context and resources, the failure to meet the basic physical and/or psychological needs either deliberately or through negligence of a





child or individual under the responsibility of the caregiver/guardian. Neglect includes but is not limited to failing to provide adequate food, sufficient or seasonally-appropriate clothing and/or shelter; failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or providing inappropriate medical treatment (e.g., administering medication when not authorized); or failing to provide a safe physical environment (e.g., exposure to violence, unsafe programming location, unsafe sleeping practices, releasing a child to an unauthorized adult, access to weapons or harmful objects, failing to child-proof a space that children will occupy, etc.).

### **Trafficking**

26. Trafficking in persons is a form of exploitation. Trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transportation, or receipt of persons by means of deception, coercion, threat, or force for the purpose of exploitation, such as for labor, prostitution, or sexual exploitation.
27. TSSS places a special focus on anti-trafficking of women and children, given their specific vulnerability and given the cruelty and perversity to which trafficked women and children are particularly subjected.
28. The following are types of prohibited exploitative conduct that are common to human trafficking schemes, in accordance with the elements defined above: forced prostitution and child pornography; forced marriages; illicit organ trade; narcotics smuggling; forced begging or labor.
29. All TSSS staff are also prohibited from employment practices related to trafficking, including:
  - d. Destroying, concealing, confiscating, or otherwise denying access to an employee's identity or immigration documents.
  - e. Using misleading or fraudulent practices to recruit employees, such as failing to disclose key terms and conditions of employment or charging employees recruitment fees.
  - f. Using recruiters that do not comply with local labor laws or charging employees recruitment fees.





- g. Failing to provide return transportation to any employee specifically brought to a country for the purpose of working on a project.
- h. Providing or arranging housing that fails to meet the host country's housing and safety standards.
- i. Failing to provide a valid employment contract or work document where required by law.

30. TSSS also prohibits staff from knowingly obtaining work-related goods or services that have been provided or produced by trafficked or forced labor.

### **Sexual Activity**

- 31. All sexual activity with a child, defined as a person younger than 18 years of age, is considered sexual abuse and is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- 32. To prevent sexual exploitation from occurring, TSSS prohibits all staff, board members, affiliates, and visitors from buying sex (prostitution) by offering money, gifts, or other material support, regardless of the age or affiliation of the individuals selling sex.
- 33. Sexual relations between staff/affiliates and program participants (of any age) are prohibited and are grounds for termination. The only exception is a consensual relationship between a staff member and a program participant; in such a case, the employee must fully disclose the relationship to their supervisor, human resources, or the senior management at the outset of employment or the relationship.
- 34. All staff must always ensure their relationships with program participants or potential program participants do not involve any form of exploitation or abuse.

### **Standard of Behaviors towards Children**

- 35. When interacting with child project participants, all staff are prohibited from:
  - a) Unsupervised or unsolicited interaction with the children
  - b) Spending excessive or unnecessary time alone with a child





- c) Encouraging a child to interact in a manner that is unrelated to official duties, including:
- Encouraging a child to meet outside of work-related activities
  - Befriending or sending private messages to a child via email, WhatsApp, Facebook, or any other social media platform.

**Supplier (Vendor) and Service Provider Code of Conduct**

36. As a supplier/service provider of TSSS and ..... (name of supplier/service provider) commits to the following:

- Prohibit all forms of exploitation and abuse (including sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking in persons, and involuntary and child labor).
- Not recruit or employ children less than 15 years of age; not recruit or employ children less than 18 years of age for work that is mentally or physically dangerous or interferes with schooling.
- Ensure systems are in place to actively prevent, address, and respond to exploitation and abuse.
- Provide accessible and confidential reporting options for employees and other stakeholders to report concerns or suspicions of exploitation and abuse as described above.
- Protect reporters or whistleblowers from retaliation.
- TSSS reserves the right to conduct due diligence audits or assessments to monitor compliance and will take reasonable steps to investigate or otherwise take appropriate action to address concerns identified.
- TSSS reserves the right to terminate any relationship for non-adherence to the above-mentioned requirements.
- Should the supplier/service provider become aware of any suspected cases of exploitation or abuse as it relates to the implementation of this agreement, TSSS requires the supplier/service provider to report through any of the following channels:





- Email address: [alert.tsss@gmail.com](mailto:alert.tsss@gmail.com)
- Phone Call: 9508316026
- One to One: Safeguarding Focal Point Person/ ICC members

### **Safe Recruitment**

37. The objective of the recruitment and selection of an employee is to choose and place a suitable person for more efficient and effective work. The organization shall use both internal and external sources of recruitment. The recruitment and selection process of all posts shall comply with the “**Human Resource Policy**” of TSSS. As part of our commitment to safeguarding and responsible recruitment practices, TSSS conducts thorough reference checks and requires candidates to undergo self-disclosure to ensure the suitability and integrity of all employees and associates.

### **Mandatory Safeguarding Orientation**

38. It is mandatory that all staff, interns, volunteers, partners, sub-recipients, suppliers, service providers, visitors (worldwide), beneficiaries, and board members receive safeguarding orientation before signing the Safeguarding Policy contract.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

39. All TSSS staff, board members, and affiliates are obligated to report any concerns or suspicions of any forms of harassment, abuse and exploitation described above involving TSSS staff, board members, affiliates, partners, program participants, suppliers, service providers or aid workers associated with another organization. The concern may be a result of witnessing the incident, being told of it, or being the object of it.

40. All such required reporters should report all concerns through any of the following channels:

- Email address: [alert.tsss@gmail.com](mailto:alert.tsss@gmail.com)
- Phone Call: 9508316026
- One to One: Safeguarding Focal Point Person/ ICC members/ Project Coordinators in the community





**41.** The reports of alleged safeguarding violations should include as much information as is readily available, such as:

- a) Address to the Presiding Officer, ICC
- b) Date, time and location of the incident
- c) Nature of what happened
- d) Any immediate help or actions required
- e) Witness if you have any
- f) Evidence if you have any (CCTV, photos, videos etc...)
- g) Reporting format available at TSSS office – Contact: 9508316026

**42.** TSSS is committed to ensuring that program participants—and members of communities in which they live—are aware of what staff behavior is acceptable and how they can raise their concerns or questions in a confidential and secure manner. TSSS will ensure communication is systematic throughout project planning; and community-based feedback, complaints and response mechanisms are available.

### **Protection of Whistle-blowers**

**43.** TSSS is committed to the protection of whistle-blowers and prohibits any form of retaliation (e.g. dismissal, victimization, harassment or any other detrimental treatment) against any individual reporting an allegation or participating in an investigation in good faith.

### **Confidentiality**

**44.** TSSS acknowledges and respects the courage and trust associated with reporting allegations of harassment. To the extent possible, TSSS seeks to maintain the confidentiality of allegations, survivor/victim, reporter, witnesses and subjects of complaint, understanding confidentiality can be critical to safety/security, reputation and well-being.

**45.** It is important for all reporters to understand, however, that TSSS may be legally mandated to follow up on certain allegations (with donors, or authorities in the case of a potential criminal offense) and that strict confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed due to the TSSS's moral and/or legal obligation to report and investigate.





46. In instances where there is a legitimate belief that an investigation could put the reporter, survivor, witnesses or anyone else in danger, TSSS will take reasonable steps to protect the safety and security of those perceived to be at risk.

#### **Support to Survivors and Safety/Security**

47. TSSS will provide immediate and appropriate support to safeguarding survivors. Support may include specialist psychosocial counseling, a medical or legal referral, support to address security concerns, and/or access to other support, as needed and appropriate.

#### **Investigation**

48. Under no circumstances, should any of TSSS staff assess or investigate an allegation or a reported allegation on their own, outside of standard reporting protocols.
49. The TSSS will follow up and investigate all safeguarding reports according to its investigation procedure, and legal and statutory obligations.

#### **Non-Retaliation**

50. TSSS and its staff are prohibited from retaliating—in the form of an adverse employment action or harassment—against any individual reporting an allegation in good faith or participating in an investigation. Any form of retaliation may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

#### **Adherence**

51. Failure to adhere to the provisions stated above may result in a range of actions and consequences. For staff this could include (but is not limited to): verbal warnings, written warnings, mandatory training or counseling, suspension, and/or termination of employment. Serious harassment such as sexual abuse and exploitation as well as persistent and severe forms of harassment is cause for immediate termination, in line with the local labor law.





52. Knowingly facilitating or aiding another aid worker to perform acts of exploitation or abuse is strictly prohibited and will be addressed in the same manner as when such an activity is undertaken directly by TSSS staff.

### **Interpretation and Questions**

53. Questions on the interpretation of this policy—and any other questions—can be directed to [alert.tsss@gmail.com](mailto:alert.tsss@gmail.com)

### **Key Words:**

Safeguarding, conduct, harassment, bullying, sexual harassment, abuse, exploitation, child labor, trafficking, survivor, confidentiality, investigation, retaliation, affiliate, sub-recipients, partners.

### **Glossary**

- **Affiliate:** includes partners and any intern or volunteer working in service to TSSS over a period of time, whether paid or unpaid, university interns, and others with a similar type of relationship to TSSS.
- **Child:** anyone under the age of 18 years of age.
- **Partners:** any entity formally engaged by TSSS (under a grant, contract, cash contribution or memorandum of understanding) to implement programmatic deliverables for the purposes of improving outcomes of vulnerable populations.
- **Sub-recipients:** any entity formally engaged by TSSS (under a grant, contract, cash contribution or memorandum of understanding) to implement programmatic deliverables for the purposes of improving outcomes of vulnerable populations.
- **Service Provider:** entity that provides services in exchange for payment, term most frequently used for specific categories of businesses such as consulting, legal advice, and telecommunications.
- **Stalking:** unwanted and/or repeated surveillance by an individual or group toward another person. Stalking behaviors are interrelated to harassment, bullying and intimidation and may include following or monitoring the victim.





- **Supplier:** entity that provides goods or services to another business or directly to the customer.
  - **Survivor:** a person who has experienced or has been exposed to a safeguarding concern. "Survivor" is generally preferred in the psychosocial support sector – in contrast to the term victim - because it implies resilience.
  - **Survivor-Centered Care:** care that is responsive to a survivor's needs and preferences, and seeks to protect survivors from stigma, discrimination, retaliation or other harmful consequences.
- .....

**Approved by the Governing Body of TSSS / Chairman of the Society**

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

This Safeguarding Policy has been approved by the Governing Body of TSSS and duly signed in the presence of all Managing Committee Members:

**Bishop Michael Akasius Toppo**  
President

**Chairman**  
**Tezpur Social Service Society**  
**Bishop's House, Tezpur**  
**Sonitpur, Assam**

**Fr. Biswajit Ekka**  
Secretary

**Director**  
**Tezpur Social Service Society**  
**Bishop's House, Tezpur**  
**Sonitpur, Assam**

**Fr. Christoraj Lakra**  
Treasurer

Treasurer

Tezpur Social Service Society  
Bishop's House, Tezpur - 784001  
Sonitpur, Assam, India