

SOCDA | ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY & PROCEDURES



SOMALI COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (SOCDA)

Empower • Engage • Develop

SAFEGUARDING & PROTECTION POLICY

Prevention, reporting and response to safeguarding concerns

SOCDA-SAF-POL-001

1. PURPOSE

SOCDA is committed to ensuring that all people who come into contact with its programmes, staff, volunteers, partners and operations are treated with dignity and protected from harm.

This Policy establishes SOCDA's framework for preventing and responding to:

- Abuse
- Exploitation
- Neglect
- Violence
- Harassment
- Sexual misconduct
- Child abuse
- Safeguarding violations
- Abuse of power

SOCDA applies a **zero-tolerance approach to abuse and exploitation**.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

SOCDA shall:

Do no harm, prevent abuse, respond appropriately to concerns, protect people at risk, and ensure that everyone associated with SOCDA understands their safeguarding responsibilities.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of **every SOCDA employee, volunteer, consultant, board member, partner and representative**.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

- Board members
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Interns
- Consultants
- Contractors

- Partners
- Community facilitators
- Enumerators
- Suppliers where relevant
- Visitors
- Any person representing SOCDA

It applies to all SOCDA activities, including:

- Offices
 - Field operations
 - Community activities
 - Training
 - Events
 - Assessments
 - Digital activities
 - Travel
 - Online communications
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4. SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

SOCDA shall be guided by:

4.1 Do No Harm

SOCDA activities must not unnecessarily expose people to harm.

4.2 Dignity and Respect

Everyone must be treated with dignity.

4.3 Best Interests of the Child

Where children are involved, their safety and best interests must be prioritised.

4.4 Non-Discrimination

Safeguarding protections apply regardless of gender, age, disability, status or background.

4.5 Accountability

SOCDA personnel are accountable for their conduct.

4.6 Confidentiality

Safeguarding information must be handled securely.

4.7 Survivor-Centred Approach

Responses should prioritise safety, dignity, choice and wellbeing of survivors.

4.8 Zero Retaliation

No person should be punished for raising a genuine safeguarding concern in good faith.

PART I — SAFEGUARDING DEFINITIONS

5. SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding means measures taken to prevent and respond to harm caused by organisational personnel, activities or representatives.

6. CHILD

For SOCDA purposes, a child is a person below the applicable legal age of adulthood, and SOCDA shall apply the strongest applicable child-protection standard.

7. CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse may include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation
- Harmful practices
- Online abuse

8. EXPLOITATION

Exploitation occurs when a person uses another person's vulnerability, power or trust for personal or organisational benefit.

9. ABUSE OF POWER

Abuse of power occurs where authority or influence is used improperly to harm, exploit, intimidate or obtain an improper benefit.

PART II — PROHIBITED CONDUCT

10. SOCDA PROHIBITS

All personnel are prohibited from:

- Sexual exploitation.
 - Sexual abuse.
 - Sexual harassment.
 - Child sexual abuse.
 - Physical abuse.
 - Emotional abuse.
 - Exploitation.
 - Neglect.
 - Bullying.
 - Intimidation.
 - Discrimination.
 - Retaliation.
 - Abuse of authority.
 - Exchange of assistance for sexual favours.
 - Any conduct that places programme participants at unreasonable risk.
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11. SEXUAL CONDUCT WITH CHILDREN

Sexual activity involving children is strictly prohibited.

A claim that the age of the child was unknown shall not excuse prohibited conduct.

12. EXPLOITATION OF BENEFICIARIES

SOCDA personnel must never:

- Demand money for assistance.
 - Demand favours in exchange for services.
 - Use programme assistance to obtain personal benefits.
 - Exploit beneficiary dependency.
 - Use their position to establish inappropriate relationships.
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PART III — CHILD SAFEGUARDING

13. CHILD SAFEGUARDING COMMITMENT

SOCDA recognises that children may face heightened risks during humanitarian, development and community-based interventions.

Programme design shall therefore consider:

- Child safety.
 - Appropriate supervision.
 - Safe participation.
 - Referral pathways.
 - Confidentiality.
 - Consent/assent requirements where applicable.
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14. WORKING WITH CHILDREN

When programmes involve children, SOCDA should establish:

- Child-safe activity locations.
 - Appropriate adult supervision.
 - Safe transportation arrangements.
 - Appropriate staff-to-child ratios.
 - Child-friendly communication.
 - Safeguarding reporting mechanisms.
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15. ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTION

Personnel should avoid unnecessary isolated one-to-one situations with children.

Where individual interaction is necessary, appropriate safeguards should be applied.

16. PHYSICAL CONTACT

Staff must avoid inappropriate physical contact with children.

Any physical interaction must be appropriate, necessary and culturally respectful.

17. PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

SOCDA personnel must not photograph or record children for personal purposes.

Programme photography must:

- Have legitimate programme purpose.
 - Follow consent procedures.
 - Protect dignity.
 - Avoid identifying vulnerable children unnecessarily.
 - Not expose children to risk.
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18. DIGITAL SAFEGUARDING

SOCDA personnel must not:

- Request inappropriate images from children.
 - Engage children in inappropriate online communication.
 - Contact children through personal accounts without legitimate programme reason.
 - Share confidential child information publicly.
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PART IV — SAFER RECRUITMENT

19. SAFER RECRUITMENT

Safeguarding shall be integrated into recruitment.

Depending on role and applicable requirements, SOCDA may conduct:

- Reference checks.
 - Identity verification.
 - Qualification checks.
 - Employment history checks.
 - Appropriate background screening.
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20. SAFEGUARDING DECLARATION

Relevant employees and personnel should acknowledge:

"I understand SOCDA's safeguarding responsibilities and agree to comply with the organisation's Safeguarding, Child Protection and Code of Conduct requirements."

21. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Positions involving contact with children or vulnerable people should clearly identify safeguarding responsibilities.

PART V — SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

22. INDUCTION

All personnel must receive safeguarding orientation appropriate to their role.

Training should cover:

- Safeguarding principles.
- Code of Conduct.
- Recognising abuse.
- Reporting procedures.
- Confidentiality.
- PSEA.
- Child protection.
- Appropriate behaviour.

23. REFRESHER TRAINING

SOCDA should provide periodic refresher training.

PART VI — PROGRAMME SAFEGUARDING

24. SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT

Before significant activities, programme teams should identify:

- Who could be harmed?
- What could cause harm?
- Where could harm occur?
- What controls exist?
- What additional measures are required?

25. SAFEGUARDING RISK MATRIX

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Rating	Mitigation	Owner
Child exploitation					
Sexual abuse					
Staff misconduct					
Unsafe activity					
Data exposure					

26. PARTNER SAFEGUARDING

Partners should be required to:

- Maintain appropriate safeguarding standards.
- Sign relevant agreements.
- Train personnel.
- Report concerns.
- Cooperate with investigations.
- Protect programme participants.

Safeguarding requirements should be incorporated into partnership agreements.

PART VII — REPORTING

27. DUTY TO REPORT

Anyone working with or representing SOCDA who becomes aware of a safeguarding concern should report it through the approved reporting mechanism.

Personnel should not attempt to conduct their own investigation unless specifically authorised.

28. REPORTABLE CONCERNS

Reportable concerns include suspected:

- Child abuse.
 - Sexual exploitation.
 - Sexual abuse.
 - Sexual harassment.
 - Physical abuse.
 - Serious neglect.
 - Exploitation.
 - Abuse of authority.
 - Retaliation.
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29. REPORTING CHANNELS

SOCDA should establish multiple reporting channels, such as:

- Safeguarding focal point.
- Designated management contact.
- Confidential email.
- Telephone channel.
- Complaint mechanism.
- Other safe channels appropriate to the operational context.

SOCDA Safeguarding Contact:

Name: _____

Position: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

30. IMMEDIATE SAFETY

Where there is an immediate threat to someone's safety, the priority shall be to take reasonable steps to protect the person from further harm and seek appropriate emergency/protection assistance where available.

PART VIII — RESPONSE

31. INITIAL RESPONSE

Upon receiving a concern, SOCDA should:

1. Ensure immediate safety.
 2. Listen respectfully.
 3. Avoid blame.
 4. Record essential information.
 5. Maintain confidentiality.
 6. Refer appropriately.
 7. Notify authorised personnel.
 8. Initiate the appropriate response process.
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32. DO NOT INVESTIGATE INFORMALLY

Personnel receiving a safeguarding allegation should not:

- Interrogate the survivor.
 - Conduct their own investigation.
 - Promise a particular outcome.
 - Confront the alleged perpetrator.
 - Share information unnecessarily.
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33. SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH

SOCDA responses should prioritise:

- Safety.
- Dignity.
- Respect.
- Confidentiality.
- Non-discrimination.
- Informed choice.
- Appropriate referral.

34. CONFIDENTIALITY

Safeguarding information should be shared strictly on a **need-to-know basis**.

Information must be stored securely.

35. RECORD KEEPING

Safeguarding records should include only information necessary for managing the case and should be stored separately from ordinary personnel/programme files where appropriate.

PART IX — REFERRAL

36. REFERRAL PRINCIPLE

Where appropriate, SOCDA may refer survivors or affected persons to qualified services, such as:

- Health services.
- Psychosocial support.
- Protection services.
- Legal assistance.
- Child protection services.

Referrals should consider safety, consent and availability of services.

37. REFERRAL DIRECTORY

SOCDA should maintain a regularly updated directory of relevant referral services in its operational locations.

Service	Location	Contact	Type
Health			
Protection			
PSS			
Child protection			

PART X — ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF

38. ALLEGATION MANAGEMENT

Where an allegation involves SOCDA personnel:

- The allegation must be handled impartially.
- Confidentiality must be maintained.
- Appropriate management action should be taken.
- The alleged subject should be treated fairly.
- Retaliation must not occur.
- Relevant external reporting obligations must be considered.

39. INVESTIGATION

Where an investigation is required, it should be conducted by appropriately authorised and competent persons.

Investigations should be:

- Impartial.
- Confidential.
- Evidence-based.
- Timely.
- Properly documented.

40. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Where misconduct is substantiated, SOCDA may take disciplinary action consistent with:

- HR Policy.
 - Employment contracts.
 - Applicable requirements.
 - Due process.
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PART XI — RETALIATION

41. PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION

SOCDA prohibits retaliation against anyone who:

- Reports a concern in good faith.
- Participates in an investigation.
- Requests safeguarding support.

Retaliation may itself constitute misconduct.

PART XII — CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

42. EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR

SOCDA personnel shall:

- Treat people with respect.
 - Maintain professional boundaries.
 - Protect confidential information.
 - Report concerns.
 - Avoid conflicts of interest.
 - Follow safeguarding requirements.
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43. UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Personnel must not:

- Abuse their authority.
 - Exploit beneficiaries.
 - Engage in sexual misconduct.
 - Humiliate or threaten people.
 - Use assistance as leverage.
 - Engage in inappropriate relationships with programme participants where prohibited or where power imbalance creates safeguarding concerns.
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PART XIII — COMMUNITY AWARENESS

44. INFORMING COMMUNITIES

SOCDA should communicate:

- What services it provides.
 - Who is eligible.
 - That services should not require sexual or personal favours.
 - How to raise complaints.
 - How to report safeguarding concerns.
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45. ACCESSIBLE REPORTING

Complaint mechanisms should consider:

- Literacy.
 - Language.
 - Disability.
 - Gender.
 - Safety.
 - Cultural context.
 - Geographic access.
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PART XIV — SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE

46. SAFEGUARDING FOCAL POINT

SOCDA shall designate a Safeguarding Focal Point responsible for:

- Awareness.
- Training coordination.
- Advice.
- Reporting pathway management.
- Safeguarding risk monitoring.
- Policy implementation.

The focal point must not be the sole mechanism for reporting; alternative reporting routes should exist.

47. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Senior management remains ultimately responsible for ensuring safeguarding systems are implemented.

Safeguarding should not be delegated solely to the focal point.

48. BOARD OVERSIGHT

The Board should receive appropriate assurance regarding:

- Policy implementation.
 - Major safeguarding risks.
 - Training.
 - Compliance.
 - Serious incidents, subject to confidentiality requirements.
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PART XV — SAFEGUARDING MONITORING

49. SAFEGUARDING KPIs

SOCDA should monitor:

KPI	Target
Personnel receiving safeguarding induction	100%
Relevant staff completing refresher training	≥95%
Projects with safeguarding risk assessment	100%
Partners assessed for safeguarding	100%
Safeguarding concerns recorded appropriately	100%
Reporting channels communicated to communities	100%
Retaliation cases appropriately addressed	100%

PART XVI — SAFEGUARDING AUDIT

SOCDA should periodically review:

- Recruitment controls.
- Staff training.
- Programme risk assessments.
- Reporting channels.
- Partner compliance.
- Community awareness.
- Case-management procedures.

PART XVII — IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Before this policy becomes fully operational, SOCDA should establish:

- Safeguarding focal point.

- Alternative reporting channels.
- Safeguarding reporting form.
- Incident register.
- Referral directory.
- Safeguarding induction module.
- Staff Code of Conduct acknowledgement.
- Safer recruitment procedures.
- Programme safeguarding risk assessment.
- Partner safeguarding requirements.
- Confidential case-management procedure.
- Community awareness materials.

PART XVIII — SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT FORM

Case Reference: _____

Date Received: _____

Reported By: _____

Location: _____

Type of Concern: _____

Immediate Safety Concern: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Action Taken: _____

Referral Required: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Reported to Safeguarding Focal Point: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Confidentiality Classification: Restricted

PART XIX — SOCDA SAFEGUARDING COMMITMENT

Every SOCDA representative should understand:

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Silence can increase risk. Concerns should be reported through safe and appropriate channels.

APPROVAL

Approved by: SOCDA Governing Board

Board Resolution No.: _____

Chairperson: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Effective Date: _____

Next Review Date: _____
