

AXIS SAEGUARDING POLICY



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COMMITMENT

AXIS is committed to zero tolerance of sexual and any other harassment, exploitation, and abuse in AXIS itself, in partner organizations and in our joint projects. Working with quality education and culturally sensitive topics, such as SRHR in education (CSE), only underlines the responsibility for protecting members, staff, volunteers¹ and target groups of AXIS and partner organizations. We must all be aware of and alert to issues related to safeguarding, and we must know what to do, who to approach and how to raise alarm.

The Board of AXIS has therefore developed this Safeguarding Policy with immediately inputs from staff and volunteers, later followed by comments also from partner organizations. AXIS' partners have their own safeguarding policies, which are (or will be) in adherence with AXIS' Safeguarding Policy, no later than October 2023. To ensure alignment, a process between AXIS volunteers, secretariat and AXIS partners will take place in 2022 and 2023 to ensure common understanding and ownership through a process of dialogue based on case stories, capacity building and reporting formats.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect children, youth, and adults, with whom AXIS works, from any harm that may be caused due to their encountering AXIS. This includes harm arising from

- a. The conduct of staff, volunteers or personnel associated with AXIS
- b. The design and implementation of AXIS projects and activities

SCOPE

The scope of this Safeguarding Policy includes:

1. All staff and volunteers contracted by AXIS.
2. Associated personnel engaged with work or visits related to AXIS, including but not limited to the following: consultants, volunteers, contractors, anyone visiting projects including journalists and film makers.

This safeguarding policy is survivor-centered², and is the policy of AXIS, approved by the AXIS' Board. This implies that all AXIS volunteers and staff must work in adherence with this policy (as well as the anti-corruption policy and the code of conduct). But as AXIS is working in cooperation

¹ AXIS is a volunteer-based organization. This signifies that apart from the staff at the secretariate, all are volunteers, whether coordinators board members, technical group members, program group members etc.

² A survivor-centred approach is defined by the United Nations as one which seeks to empower the survivor/victim by prioritizing their rights, needs, and wishes.

with national partners, and these partners engage the target groups directly, it is a prerequisite for our partnership that there is agreement and adherence, between AXIS policy and that of the partners.

WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING AND PSHEA (PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE)?

Safeguarding is broader than PSHEA, as it also deals with non-sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, but is similarly closely linked with power relations.

1. Safeguarding is the responsibility that AXIS and partners have, securing that staff, volunteers, operations, and programs do no harm to the children, youth, and adults with whom they work. The main issue is to protect vulnerable individuals (children, youth, and adults, with special focus on girls, young women and women, people with disabilities, LGBTI /non-conforming people, and ethnic groups) from any abuse, neglect, and harm. Safeguarding is also the responsibility that AXIS has in securing that partners, staff and volunteers are not themselves exposed to the risk of harassment, exploitation, and abuse.
2. PSHEA (Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse) refers to the measures taken to protect people from notably sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse by staff, superiors, and associated personnel.

The United Nations (UN) defines these as follows:

- Sexual Harassment: Any improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate, or embarrass another or which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment (UN Women 2013)
- Sexual Exploitation: 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 (UNHCR 2021)
- Sexual Abuse: any actual or threatened physical intrusion of sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions (UNHCR 2021)

In short, safeguarding is about:

1. Recognizing the issues
2. Reacting positively and immediately to a concern / complaint
3. Reporting the concern / complaint further in the system
4. Assessing / investigating the concern / complaint
5. Responding to the concern / complaint
6. Recording the concern / complaint and the response
7. Referring the victims / survivors to get further help

FRAMEWORK

“It is a demand from Danida and CISU that all program organizations and partners have incorporated and implemented PSHEA before January 2024, including capacity building and securing implementation at partner level in order to prevent, reveal and actively follow up on all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse and / or harassment at all levels, both internally and externally.” (CISU 2022)

PSHEA is part of contracts and cooperation agreements between AXIS and CISU (Danida). AXIS must report back to CISU and Danida in case of sexual violations, no matter what. At the same time, there is a clear mutual accountability, where partner organization must report any sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse to AXIS, as also AXIS must report to the relevant partner organization in case of violations of the Safeguarding/PSHEA Policy. This must be clear in partner organizations’ safeguarding policies. PSHEA and safeguarding must also be part of the project monitoring and risk assessment.

AXIS commits to addressing Safeguarding including PSHEA throughout its work through the 3 pillars of:



AXIS staff, volunteers and associated personnel must not:

- Engage in any sexual relation with project community members and beneficiaries, staff, partners, or related persons
- Subject any beneficiaries to physical, emotional, or psychological abuse or neglect
- Engage in any commercially exploitative activities
- Exchange money, goods, or services for sexual services
- Engage in any private commercial activities with partners, staff, or beneficiaries

PREVENTION

AXIS' responsibilities

AXIS will:

- Ensure that AXIS and partners are adhering to the same principles in their safeguarding policies e.g., zero tolerance.
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers, consultants, and partners have ownership of and know their responsibilities.
- Design and undertake all its projects and activities in a way that to the best ability protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from encountering AXIS. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our projects is gathered and communicated.
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing, and deploying staff, volunteers, and associated personnel.
- Ensure that staff, volunteers, and partners receive continuous training on safeguarding.
- Appoint **two Safeguarding Focal Points from the board** and establish an independent e-mail address, safeguarding@axisngo.dk, for them and making clear reference to this on the AXIS webpage.
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns and / or violations of the SG and PSHEA policy promptly, according to due process and secure that necessary measures are taken.

Responsibilities of AXIS staff and volunteers

AXIS staff, volunteers and associated personnel must:

- Follow the culture, rules, and laws of the relevant project country.
- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevent safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding and PSHEA policy. This includes ensuring that existing unequal power structures are always considered in the relationship with partners, beneficiaries etc.
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by AXIS staff, volunteers, or associated personnel to the chosen Safeguarding Focal Points as well as (if relevant) to the AXIS Secretariat / Chairperson of the board.
- Ensure that all concerns, suspicions etc. are recorded by the chosen Safeguarding Focal Points to ensure that data is collected in one location for future reference.
- Ensure that only the Secretariat or the Chairperson of the Board provide staff, volunteers, partner staff etc. with written or oral references regarding future jobs. Giving a reference will only happen after a check for 'red flags' with the Safeguarding Focal Points to ensure that no such flags have been raised.
- Participate in Safeguarding training prior to any direct personal engagement with partners and beneficiaries.

REPORTING

Policies are one thing – another is how to implement the policy and how to respond in case of breach/violation of the policies in AXIS and in the partner organizations. Trust is here the all-important factor. If you are a victim of e.g., harassment or sexual abuse or if you have experienced others being subjected to such things, you must be confident that you can report this anonymously, that you will be taken seriously and be supported, that a thorough investigation will take place and that the necessary measures will be taken by AXIS and / or partners.

- AXIS has ensured in its reporting formats (report 4), that the work regarding safeguarding is reflected on by the partners.
- AXIS will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns or violations are made available to staff and volunteers, that these are introduced to all new staff and volunteers and that staff and volunteers are reminded of these regularly.
- Means for reporting will be the appointment of two safeguarding focal points, and an independent e-mail address, safeguarding@axisngo.dk for the two focal points.
- AXIS will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners, beneficiaries, and official bodies.
- If volunteers or staff is notified of a complaint from a third party, it is the responsibility of the volunteers and staff to ensure that the complaint is logged by the two safeguarding focal points.

How to report a safeguarding concern?

A concern or complaint

1. Should be secured anonymity
2. Written in your own language
3. You can write an email or use the file format on the AXIS webpage
4. Will be handled as close to the incident as possible
5. Will be possible to trace through the system for the complainant
6. The process of the investigation of the concern / complaint will be known to the person complaining
7. The outcome and recommendations from the safeguarding focal point will be made available to the complainant
8. The concern and complaint should be filed in a secure place by the safeguarding focal point and be deleted after no more than 3 years or at the end of the program (whichever comes last) or no more than 2 years after the end of the employment/ coordinator contract (whichever comes first)



AXIS' staff and volunteers, who have complaints or concerns relating to Safeguarding and PSHEA within AXIS or from staff in the partner organizations should report immediately to the safeguarding focal point or use the online complaint mechanism. The complaint might be anonymous, but AXIS will need to know country and organization or AXIS itself to be able to investigate the reporting carefully. Also, an e-mail address is needed to inform back (an anonymous email address is sufficient).

In case of complaints or concerns relating to safeguarding and PSHEA that partner staff, community members and beneficiaries experience from AXIS staff or volunteers, these should be reported firstly to the partner organization, in adherence with the protocols in the partner policy. The partner organization should immediately report this to the AXIS Independent Safeguarding Focal Point, who will then take adequate measures and ensure follow-up.

In any case of violations of AXIS safeguarding policy incl. PSHEA, AXIS will report back to CISU/Danida.

RESPONSE

The Safeguarding Focal Points will be co-responsible for the follow up on any raised concern, complaints, violations received. After having examined the concern or complaint, the Safeguarding Focal Points will make a recommendation for the further process, investigation and adequate response including any consequences to support, engagement, or contracts as well as any reference to the legal systems in question. The Safeguarding Focal Points will then alert the Chairperson of the Board (assuming the concern or complaint has nothing to do with the chairperson), and final decisions will be taken. In case the chairman is part of the complaint, the safeguarding person will instead approach the Executive Committee. AXIS realizes that in a small organization, it is difficult to find neutral and independent persons in the organization but will do everything possible to minimize the danger of power relations, partiality and bias negatively impacting the response to any complaint. The two chosen Safeguarding Focal Points are Emilie Faurholdt and Hans Andresen from the AXIS board safeguarding@axisngo.dk

This policy will be reviewed annually

Approved by AXIS board

September 26th 2022