



Preventing Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (PSEA) Policy

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Organizational Profile

Bargad is a youth development organization actively working to promote peace, justice and cooperation amongst the youth in Pakistan. The organization has focused on creating opportunities and amplifying the voices of the youth ever since its inception in 1997, leading to a vast network of around 3000 youth volunteers, known as the Bargad Volunteer Network (BVN) throughout the country.

Bargad's Vision:

Socially responsible, politically aware, forward-looking, and gender sensitive youth and women who respect freedom, equality and the rule of law.

Bargad's Mission:

- Empower vulnerable youth (ages 12-19) and (ages 15 -29) to reach their full potential through education, mentorship and innovative interventions designed to enhance their total well-being.
- To invest in youth-led and youth-centered ideas, to convene key stakeholders in the sector and advocate for systems and policy changes that meet youths' needs.
- Empower women to end violence against women.

Bargad has implemented more than 100 projects on youth training¹, youth mobilization and policy advocacy, including the provision of technical assistance to all the provincial governments of Pakistan, regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and the State of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) for the formulation of their respective youth policies. These policies have been approved by the provincial governments of Punjab (2012), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2016) and Sindh (2018), resulting in governments' pledges to allocate 4% budget to sports and youth affairs, 15% on the women employment quota, implementation of the E-Rozgar programs, and on youth participation in the local governments, respectively. Bargad has also conducted Capacity Enhancement workshops on youth development with officials of the youth affairs departments of Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh.

Bargad has a youth network of 782 individuals, civil society organizations and government institutions, with Youth engagements of 76 Universities, 46 Colleges and 35 Higher Secondary Schools, 33 student societies in 84 Districts from 6 provinces and regions.

The organization has previously partnered with 26 membership based student organizations and 15 Youth Groups over Pakistan; producing the largest pool of researches and publications

¹ Since 2003, the organization has trained 7880 youth activists and young faculty only through training workshops and peer sessions in issues of social development.

on various aspects of youth than any other civil society organization in Pakistan, while also pioneering a youth track of peace and diplomacy in the South Asian region.

The hallmark of the organization is that its core youth volunteers participate in all aspects of the projects - from action-planning to project execution, while also mapping in the course of its work; issues as well as challenges identified by the youth across the country².

² The Youth in the mapping is part of the Youth Cohorts in the districts where Bargad has actively worked or is presently working.

Introduction

Bargad is committed to promoting youth development and protecting human rights in Pakistan. As part of our dedication to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all individuals involved in our programs and activities, we have implemented this Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy. This policy outlines the organization's stance on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, and establishes guidelines for reporting and responding to such incidents.

Policy Statement

Bargad is committed to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in all its forms, including but not limited to sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual violence, and any other form of inappropriate sexual behavior. The Bargad recognizes that SEA is a violation of human rights and is detrimental to the well-being and dignity of individuals. We firmly condemn any act of SEA within our programs, activities, and the communities we serve.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, participants, volunteers, trainers, contractors, consultants, partner organizations, and any other individual associated with Bargad. It encompasses all programs, activities, and events organized or supported by the organization, both in Pakistan and internationally.

Key Principles

1. **Respect and Dignity:** We uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals, and strive to create an inclusive and safe environment free from harassment, abuse, and exploitation.
2. **Zero Tolerance:** We have zero tolerance for any form of sexual exploitation and abuse, irrespective of the perpetrator's position or the victim's role.
3. **Confidentiality and Whistleblower Protection:** We encourage reporting of SEA incidents and ensure the confidentiality of individuals involved. Retaliation against whistleblowers is strictly prohibited and will be dealt with appropriately.
4. **Survivor-Centered Approach, Awareness and Referral Mechanism:** We prioritize the well-being and support of survivors of SEA, ensuring access to appropriate services, information, and assistance. All team members of Bargad are required to share the information about locally available support services which may include but not limited to:
 - a. Offices of Ombudspersons
 - b. Punjab Women's help line of Punjab Commission on the Status of Women-1043
 - c. Punjab Police Safety App by Punjab Safe City Authorities
 - d. Cyber-crimes and harassment to FIA at complaints@fia.gov.pk or helpdesk@nr3c.gov.pk or helpdesk@nr3c.gov.pk

- e. Sahil Toll-Free helpline: 0800-13518
- f. Pakistan Citizen portal

Prevention Measures

1. Code of Conduct:

All individuals associated with Bargad must adhere to a comprehensive code of conduct that explicitly prohibits SEA and outlines expected behavior.

2. Screening and Vetting:

Appropriate background checks and reference verifications are conducted for employees, participants, volunteers, trainer and partners working directly or indirectly with vulnerable populations. *Annex 1-Reference Check Form and Annex 2-Self Declaration Form to be filled out.*

3. Training and Awareness:

Regular training and awareness programs are provided to staff, volunteers, service providers and partners, highlighting the organization's PSEA policies, signs of SEA, reporting mechanisms, and the rights and responsibilities of all individuals.

4. Reporting Mechanisms:

Clear and accessible reporting mechanisms are established, including multiple channels (email, dedicated staff) to report SEA incidents, ensuring that survivors and witnesses can safely come forward.

Please refer to the Inquiry Committee section and Bargad's Whistleblowing Policy for details.

5. Response and Investigations:

Prompt and thorough investigations will be conducted upon receipt of a report, following a survivor-centred and impartial approach. Appropriate actions will be taken, ranging from disciplinary measures to legal action, depending on the severity of the incident.

Responsibilities

1. Leadership:

The organization's leadership is responsible for establishing and maintaining a culture of safety and accountability, ensuring compliance with the PSEA policy, and supporting survivors.

2. Staff, Volunteers, Service Provider, BODs:

All staff, volunteers, service providers and Board of Directors are responsible for adhering to the PSEA policy, being vigilant for signs of SEA, reporting incidents promptly, and cooperating fully with investigations.

3. Partners:

Partner organizations working with Bargad are expected to uphold similar standards and principles regarding SEA prevention and response.

4. Implementation and Review:

This policy will be disseminated widely and made available to all individuals associated with Bargad. Regular reviews will be conducted to ensure its effectiveness, responsiveness, and alignment with national and international standards. Any necessary updates or amendments will be made accordingly.

By implementing this policy, Bargad reaffirms its commitment to maintaining a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all individuals involved in our programs and activities.

In this document, unless there is anything repugnant in the context, the following words shall have the meanings ascribed thereto below.

“Sexual Harassment” means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal, (sounds, words, sexually colored remarks, obscene jokes) or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, or the attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment;

“Violence”, within the context of the workplace, includes any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated or assaulted in his or her employment. Workplace violence includes:

- Threatening behaviour - such as shaking fists, destroying property or throwing objects.
- Verbal or written threats - any expression of intent to inflict harm.
- Harassment - any behaviour that demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, annoys, alarms or verbally abuses a person and that is known or would be expected to be unwelcome. This includes words, gestures, intimidation, bullying, or other inappropriate activities.
- Verbal abuse - swearing, insults or condescending language.
- Physical attacks - hitting, shoving, pushing or kicking.
- Criminal – theft, rape, arson and murder

Workplace violence is not limited to incidents that occur within a traditional workplace. Work-related violence can occur at off-site business-related functions (conferences, trade shows), at social events related to work, in clients' homes or away from work but resulting from work (a threatening telephone call to your home from a client).

“Volunteer”, shall mean any person who voluntarily provides services to **BARGAD**.

Inquiry Committee

Bargad shall constitute an Inquiry Committee within thirty days of the enactment of this policy to enquire into complaints under this policy.

The Committee shall consist of three members, of whom at least one member shall be a woman. One member shall be from senior management, and one shall be a senior representative of the employees or a senior employee. One or more members can be co-opted from outside the organization if the organization is unable to designate three members from within as described above. A Chairperson shall be designated from amongst them.

In case a complaint is made against one of the members of the Inquiry Committee, that member should be replaced by another for that particular case. Such a member may be from within or outside the organization.

In case no competent authority is designated, the organization shall, within thirty days of the enactment of this policy, designate a competent authority.

On receipt of any written complaint, the Inquiry Committee will acknowledge receipt to the complainant within 3 days. Cases of a severe nature will be responded to within 24 hours.

The IC will then summon the accused person/both parties for clarification on the accusation framed against him/her in writing.

After getting the written response from the accused, the IC will investigate and suggest appropriate corrective action to the concerned authorities.

The matter will be resolved within 7 days. If the case falls under the criminal penalty, it will be reported to relevant government authorities with the consent of the victim.

The power of the inquiry committee shall be according to Clause 5 of the ***Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010***.

Conflict of Interest

- a. All employees, Board members and volunteers must ensure that their personal interests do not conflict with the duties they owe to BARGAD. In particular, one should never become personally involved in any transaction, negotiation or contract on behalf of the Organization with an entity in which he/ she or his/ her relative or friend has an interest, without full written disclosure to and prior written approval of the Board. In case of a Board member having a personal interest, he/ she will not be able to vote on the matter when it comes for approval.

- b. Conflicts of interest can occur quite frequently and are not necessarily corrupt. It is how they are identified and managed that is important. If conflicts of interest are not properly identified and managed, they can endanger the integrity of BARGAD and can damage its reputation. Employees, Board members and volunteers are expected to show good judgment and, when in doubt, contact their superior/ the Board, as applicable.

1.1 Abuse of power and extortion

- a. Employees, Board members and volunteers may not use any form of extortion, whether as a method to gain undue advantage or otherwise use their status within the Organization for personal gain. Employees, Board members and volunteers will use BARGAD property, facilities, services and financial resources strictly in accordance with BARGAD's administrative policies laid down in the **Operations Manual**.

1.2 Bribery

Employees, Board members and volunteers should neither receive bribes from potential partners to make contracts with them nor give bribes to them as a way of influencing them.

1.3 Nepotism and Favoritism

While there are certain prohibitions against the employment of close relatives, it is paramount that the integrity of the personnel process be maintained. Nepotism is favoritism toward relatives and friends. For instance, offering employment to a relative or friend, despite the fact that there are others who are better qualified and willing to perform the job, or offering higher earnings, or other benefits to employees who have a personal relation with the management or Board member. To avoid favoritism and nepotism in procurement and recruitment, BARGAD follows the **Procurement and HR policies**.

Any case involving a close relative of the Board members of **BARGAD** for either recruitment or procurement will go to the Board, and that member will not have a vote on this issue.

1.4 Gifts

Employees, Board members and volunteers should refrain from offering or receiving gifts and/ or entertainment with a view to improperly influencing or inducing those persons to obtain some benefit or result. BARGAD will not give or receive, directly or indirectly, any gift or other favour that may influence the exercise of its functions, performance of duty or may in other ways have the effect of possibly harming BARGAD. Gifts are defined as but not limited to, services, travel, entertainment, material things or favours. In order to respect local traditions and conventional hospitality, minor gifts of up to Rs. 5,000/- may be accepted, but the same must be reported to the supervisor.

The value of an acceptable gift varies in different countries. Cash gifts can never be accepted. All employees, Board members and volunteers are expected to show good judgment and, when in doubt, contact their superior/Board. A rule of thumb is that a gift should never influence one's independent judgment, and one must share the minor gifts (if these are shareable) with other colleagues.

1.5 Fraud, Theft or Illegal Activity

Employees, Board members and volunteers shall be alert and vigilant with respect to fraud, theft, or significant illegal activity committed within the Organisation and should immediately report the same to their supervisor. Employees, Board members and volunteers must ensure that fraud or violation of BARGAD Rules is not done by them willfully when filing claims or incurring expenses for BARGAD. The attention of the employees, Board members and volunteers is drawn to the relevant policies in this regard. Employees, Board members and volunteers must also ensure that BARGAD letterheads, stamps or other items are not used in an unauthorized way.

1.6 Copyright

Any work undertaken by an employee, Board member and volunteer for BARGAD in the course of their official duties is the sole property of BARGAD and may not be retained, copied or used in any way for personal benefit unless otherwise agreed with BARGAD.

1.7 BARGAD Complaint Procedures and Handling Inquiry

- a. The procedure for holding an inquiry shall be according to Clause 4 of ***Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010***.
- b. Employees, Board members, volunteers or others may come forward with credible information on illegal practices or violations of BARGAD Policies or Procedures.
- c. If an employee, Board member or a volunteer wishes to make a complaint, the same may be sent by email to safeguarding.bargad@gmail.com or in writing to a senior designated person. Such correspondence shall be treated in confidence.
- d. If it is a case of sexual harassment to be handled according to the law, the person harassed has to make the complaint.
- e. The complaint will be handled with great respect for the complainant and the persons/ organizations against whom the complaint is lodged. The complainant should not fear retaliation, and at the same time, BARGAD employees, Board members and volunteers should work without risk of victimization/ harassment.
- f. These complaints will be investigated by the senior designated person, who shall report to the Executive Director and the Board as the situation demands.

1.8 Accountability for non-adherence to the Anti-Harassment & Ethics policy;

All BARGAD employees, Board members and volunteers are required to follow the Policy. Breach of the Policy will be reported to the BARGAD Board for further action.

Annex 1- Reference Form

BARGAD SOCIETY OF HUMAN RESOURCES CANDIDATE REFERENCE CHECK FORM

Name Of Candidate	
Position Applied for	
Name and Title of the Referee	
Name of Referee's Organization	
Contact Number	
Knowing The Candidate (Professionally Or Personally)	
Period of association with candidate	
Date of Reference Check	

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Bargad would be grateful if you could respond to the following questions as the candidate has listed you as a reference. Your feedback will greatly assist us in determining the most suitable candidate for this job.

Reference Questions
1. To what extent do you feel the candidate understands specifics of this role?
2. Bargad is committed to Preventing Sexual Exploitation & Abuse, safeguarding of children and any type of anti-harassment, do you have any concern about this applicant or sexual misconduct? If yes, please provide details.
3. Has the candidate ever faced disciplinary action? If yes, please provide details.
4. Is there any record of fraudulent activities or criminal cases associated with the candidate? If yes, please provide details.
5. What are the candidate's key strengths and what areas would you say need improvement?
6. Whether you have any other information which is relevant to this reference.

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill this form.

³ Adolescents: 12-19; Youth age bracket in Pakistan: 15-29

Annexure 2- Self Declaration Form

Date: _____

Executive Director

Bargad Society of Human Resources
17/18, N-Block, Gulberg II, Lahore
042-35779030-31

Subject: **Self-Declaration Regarding Sanctions and Investigations**

Respected Madam,

I, _____ hereby declare that I am a job candidate applying for a position _____ within your esteemed organization. I am writing this letter to confirm that I have never been subject to any sanctions, be they disciplinary, administrative, or criminal, arising from an investigation related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in any previous employment or professional engagement.

I further declare that I have never left any previous employment pending investigation nor have I refused to cooperate in any investigation related to SEA or any other misconduct. I understand the serious implications of such actions and affirm that I have always adhered to professional conduct, ethics, and legal responsibilities throughout my career.

In support of this self-declaration, I acknowledge that any false or misleading information provided by me may lead to disqualification from the current job application process or, if discovered later, may result in immediate termination of my employment.

I am fully aware that the organization reserves the right to conduct background checks and verification of the information provided in this self-declaration. I hereby authorize the organization or its authorized representatives to verify my educational qualifications, employment history, and any other relevant information pertaining to this declaration.

Should there be any need for additional information or documentation related to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at the contact information provided below.

Thank you for considering my application, and I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the success of your organization.

Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

CNIC#: _____

Contact Number: _____

Email Address: _____