

## Safeguarding Policy

### 1. Purpose

Vets Beyond Borders is committed to safeguarding children and other vulnerable individuals and preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. This policy sets out our commitment to:

- 1.1. our approach to protecting children from harm or exploitation while engaging with our programs and services; and
- 1.2. a zero-tolerance approach towards any form of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment within our organisation and among the communities we serve.
- 1.3. ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all individuals involved in our programs, including volunteers, staff, beneficiaries, and partners.

### 2. Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all volunteers, staff members, partners, and individuals associated with Vets Beyond Borders who have contact with children or vulnerable people in the course of their duties. It applies to all programs and activities conducted by our charity, including those provided to animal welfare groups in the Asia Pacific region.

### 3. Policy Statement

#### 3.1. Recruitment and Screening

- 3.1.1. All volunteers and staff who may come into contact with children and vulnerable people must undergo a thorough screening process, including reference checks, interviews and they must obtain a [Working with Children](#) check in their state or territory.
- 3.1.2. Individuals with a history of child abuse or any relevant criminal convictions will not be permitted to work with children or vulnerable people through our charity.

#### 3.2. Prevention Measures

- 3.2.1. **Pre-Deployment Training:** All volunteers and staff engaged in our programs will undergo comprehensive training on PSEA, including recognising and preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.
- 3.2.2. **Code of Conduct:** Vets Beyond Borders will establish and enforce a clear code of conduct that sets out expected behaviours, including guidelines on interactions with beneficiaries, partners, and community members.
- 3.2.3. **Screening and Vetting:** Prior to engagement, all volunteers, staff, and partners will be subject to thorough background checks and screening processes to prevent individuals with a history of sexual misconduct or history of child abuse from joining our organisation.

- 3.2.4. **Awareness and Education:** Pre-departure briefings with volunteers to include cultural sensitivity training and discussion on promoting a culture of respect, dignity, and zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse.

### 3.3. Code of Conduct

- 3.3.1. All volunteers and staff are expected to adhere to the VBB Code of Conduct that outlines acceptable behaviour when interacting with children and vulnerable people.
- 3.3.2. This includes maintaining appropriate boundaries, avoiding physical contact except when necessary and appropriate, and using language that is respectful and age appropriate.

## 4. Training and Support

- 4.1. We provide comprehensive training to all volunteers and staff on safeguarding policies, procedures, and best practices.
- 4.2. Training includes recognising signs of harm, sexual exploitation or abuse, inappropriate behaviour and interactions with children and vulnerable people, and reporting procedures.

## 5. Reporting and Investigation

### 5.1. Sexual Exploitation

- 5.1.1 Any individual who experiences, witnesses, or becomes aware of any incident of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment within the scope of Vets Beyond Borders's activities is encouraged to report it immediately to VBB's [General Manager](#).
- 5.1.2 Reports can be made anonymously, and individuals reporting incidents will be protected from retaliation or victimisation.
- 5.1.3 Vets Beyond Borders will handle all reports of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment with the utmost confidentiality, ensuring the privacy and protection of individuals involved.
- 5.1.4 Information related to reported incidents will only be shared with authorised personnel directly involved in the investigation and response process.

### 5.2 Child Safety

- 5.2.1 Any concerns or suspicions regarding the safety or well-being of a child must be reported immediately to the [General Manager](#) or [Volunteer Coordinator](#).
- 5.2.2 Vets Beyond Borders will investigate all reported incidents promptly, impartially, and confidentially, taking appropriate action in line with our policies and procedures.
- 5.2.3 If appropriate, relevant authorities will be contacted, and support will be provided.

## 6. Compliance and Accountability

- 6.1 Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all individuals associated with Vets Beyond Borders, and failure to adhere to its provisions may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of engagement or legal consequences.
- 6.2 Vets Beyond Borders will regularly review and update this policy in accordance with best practices, legal requirements, and organisational needs.
- 6.3 Senior management and leadership are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy and fostering a safe and inclusive organisational culture.

## 7. Policy Review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation, best practices, or organisational needs.

## 8. Roles, responsibilities and delegations

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Governance Committee Chair	Lead the development, implementation, and oversight of comprehensive safeguarding measures to protect all stakeholders involved in VBB programs.
General Manager	Ensure compliance with safeguarding principles, providing leadership in creating a safe environment for staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries, and supporting the committee in policy development and training initiatives.

## 9. Related documents and links

- Vets Beyond Borders [Code of Conduct](#)
- Vets Beyond Borders [Risk Policy](#)

## 10. Definitions

**Child** means any person under the age of 18 years old.

**Volunteer** means an individual who freely offers their time and services to Vets Beyond Borders without financial compensation.

**Partner Organisation** means animal welfare, One Health, or Government Organisations who have been granted Partner Organisation status by the Programs Committee of Vets Beyond Borders.

**Safeguarding** means measures taken to protect the well-being of children from harm, abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

**Sexual Exploitation** means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to exchanging money, employment, goods, or services for sexual activities.

**Sexual Abuse:** means any actual or attempted sexual act, contact, or behaviour inflicted upon an individual without their consent, including but not limited to rape, molestation, harassment, or any other form of sexual violence.

**Sexual Harassment** means any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile or intimidating environment.

**Staff** means paid employees and individuals contracted by Vets Beyond Borders to perform specific tasks or roles.

Approved By	Board of Directors
Policy Owner	Governance Committee Chair
Last Reviewed	17 June 2024