



Safe Engagement and Interaction with Young People and Children

This policy aims to ensure that all activities at MaritimEA such as maritime heritage research, educational programs, and community engagement activities that involve children and young people (under 18 years) are conducted in a safe, ethical, and culturally appropriate manner. It aligns with Pakistan's child protection laws, international safeguarding standards, and best practices for working with youth.

1. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All MaritimEA staff, volunteers, interns, researchers, consultants and partners associated with the organisation.
- All projects undertaken by MaritimEA.
- All external initiatives in which MaritimEA staff, volunteers or interns are participants.
- All educational workshops, field visits, and community outreach programs conducted by MaritimEA staff, volunteers or interns.
- All digital engagements (social media, online surveys, virtual workshops, webinars) conducted by MaritimEA staff, volunteers or interns.

2. Guiding Principles

- **Child Safety First:** MaritimEA acknowledges that the welfare of young participants is paramount and aims to keep that in the forefront of all interactions with children and young people.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** MaritimEA aims to respect local customs, religious values, and gender norms.
- **Informed Consent:** MaritimEA will ensure that consent, written or oral, from parents/guardians (including schoolteachers, caregivers, and

school administration) is obtained for all activities and photography. Children and young people will be given the opportunity to withdraw participation at any time without penalty.

- **Transparency:** The research purpose, risks, and benefits in local languages and well as in Urdu and/or English will be provided.

3. Roles & Responsibilities

3.1 Researchers & Field Staff

- Must avoid **one-on-one interactions** with minors; always work in open, observable settings.
- Follow **gender-sensitive protocols** (e.g. female researchers shall be allocated for working with girls' groups where culturally required).

3.2 Young Participants

- Have the right to **decline participation** or withdraw at any stage.
- Must be engaged in an **age-appropriate** and non-exploitative manner.

4. Safe Engagement Practices

- MaritimEA strictly prohibits **private messaging** with minors; all communication should be through parents/guardians or in group settings.
- **Physical contact** should be minimal and only when necessary (e.g., safety assistance) and in culturally appropriate manners.

5. Reporting & Incident Management

- MaritimEA supports **mandatory reporting** of any abuse, neglect, or harm under Pakistan's **Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act (2020)**.
- **Breaches** may result in suspension, legal action, or termination of involvement.