



Protecting Pugilists from Harm: BFI's Shield Against Harassment & Abuse (SAHA)

Introduction

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) recognises the critical importance of athlete well-being, extending beyond physical fitness and technical skills. We acknowledge the vulnerability of athletes to various forms of harm, including physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse, bullying, and other unacceptable behaviors. These can have devastating consequences, impacting athletes' physical and mental health, self-worth, and dignity.

BFI is steadfast in its commitment to safeguarding our athletes and fostering a secure and respectful environment. This policy, "Protecting Pugilists from Harm: BFI's Shield Against Abuse (SAHA)," outlines BFI's comprehensive approach to preventing and addressing harassment and abuse within the sport of boxing.

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the proactive process of protecting individuals, particularly children and vulnerable adults, from harm, abuse, and exploitation. It involves creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone feels respected and valued. All stakeholders in the boxing community have a shared responsibility to actively prevent harm, listen to concerns, and respond effectively to any issues that arise.

The Need for a Safeguarding Policy

Harassment and abuse can occur at any level of sport. A comprehensive safeguarding policy is essential to protect athletes and all stakeholders involved in boxing. Such behaviors not only harm individuals but also damage the integrity of the sport and the organization. BFI's SAHA policy aims to prevent harm, address concerns, and promote a culture of respect within Indian boxing.

Scope

This policy applies to all BFI members, including athletes, coaches, officials, staff, volunteers, affiliated units, and anyone associated with BFI events and activities. All stakeholders are expected to comply with this policy and contribute to a safe and inclusive environment for everyone involved in boxing.

Guiding Principles

- **Right to Safe Participation:** Everyone has the right to participate in boxing in a safe and inclusive environment, free from all forms of harm, abuse, and exploitation. **Right to be Heard:** Everyone has the right to express concerns about their own well-being or the well-being of others without fear of reprisal. Clear reporting mechanisms will be established and communicated.
- **Duty of Care:** All individuals involved in boxing have a responsibility to prioritize the welfare of athletes and make decisions in their best interests.
- **Dignity and Respect:** Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, free from discrimination based on sex, caste, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, beliefs, or religious or political affiliations.

Purpose

BFI's SAHA policy aims to:

- **Raise Awareness:** Educate athletes, coaches, officials, and parents about recognizing and preventing harm, abuse, and exploitation.
- **Provide Resources:** Offer accessible information and support services to athletes and other stakeholders.
- **Empower Athletes:** Encourage athletes to speak up about concerns and provide safe reporting channels.
- **Respond Effectively:** Establish clear procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing all allegations of harm, abuse, or exploitation.

Recognising Harassment and Abusive Behaviors

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action:

- **Harassment:** Unwanted attention or conduct that violates dignity, creates a hostile environment, or causes intimidation, humiliation, or offense. This includes gender harassment, psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment, and neglect.
- **Gender Harassment:** Derogatory treatment based on gender, whether systemic or repeated.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually suggestive remarks, showing pornography, or any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.
- **Abuse:** Violation of an individual's rights, often based on an abuse of power and trust. This includes physical abuse, psychological abuse, hazing, sexual abuse, and discrimination.
- **Hazing:** Abusive initiation rituals, often with sexual components, targeting newcomers.

- **Physical Abuse:** Deliberate acts causing physical harm, including punching, beating, kicking, inappropriate training loads, forced alcohol consumption, or forced doping.
- **Psychological Abuse:** Confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, or any other treatment that diminishes an individual's sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing or enticing someone into sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. This includes physical contact, non-contact activities, and grooming.
- **Neglect:** Failure to provide a minimum level of care, causing harm or creating an imminent danger of harm.

Responsibilities in Preventing and Tackling Abusive Behavior

Guidelines for BFI and Affiliated Units

- Establish clear reporting mechanisms.
- Provide training and education on safeguarding.
- Conduct thorough investigations of all allegations.
- Take appropriate disciplinary action against perpetrators.
- Offer support services to victims.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the process.

Guidelines for Athletes, Coaches, Supporting Staff, Volunteers, Officials

- Act as positive role models.
- Promote a culture of respect.
- Report any concerns promptly.
- Support those who raise concerns.
- Cooperate fully with investigations.

Implementation

BFI is committed to implementing this policy effectively. This includes:

- **Dissemination:** Distributing the policy to all stakeholders.
- **Training:** Providing mandatory training on safeguarding for all BFI personnel.
- **Collaboration:** Working with affiliated units to ensure consistent implementation.
- **Monitoring and Review:** Regularly reviewing and updating the policy to ensure its effectiveness.

1. Zero Tolerance Policy

BFI has a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of harassment, abuse, and exploitation.

2. Reporting Procedures

All stakeholders are encouraged to report any incidents of harm, abuse, or exploitation to the SAHA Committee. Clear reporting channels will be established and communicated.

3. Education and Training

BFI shall provide comprehensive education and training programs for athletes, coaches, officials, and other stakeholders on recognizing, preventing, and reporting harm, abuse, and exploitation.

4. Support Services

BFI will offer support services to victims of harm, abuse, and exploitation, including counseling, therapy, and legal assistance.

5. **Sanctions**

BFI has the authority to impose sanctions on individuals found to have engaged in harmful or abusive behavior, including disqualification from competition, suspension, or expulsion from the federation.

6. **Independent Investigation**

BFI may conduct independent investigations to ensure a fair and thorough examination of any incidents.

7. **Compliance with Laws**

BFI complies with all relevant laws and regulations regarding harassment, abuse, and exploitation and will cooperate with law enforcement agencies as necessary.

8. **Victim Protection**

BFI will protect victims from retaliation and ensure confidentiality. Any retaliation or unethical behavior during an investigation should be reported immediately.

9. **Regular Review**

BFI will regularly review and update its policies and procedures to reflect best practices and current laws.

11. **Affiliated Units**

Affiliated units are expected to adopt and implement BFI's safeguarding policy, including clear reporting, investigative, and disciplinary procedures.

SAHA Committee

A dedicated SAHA Committee will be established to oversee the implementation of this policy, receive reports, conduct investigations, and make recommendations for action. Contact information for the committee will be widely disseminated.

Complaint Mechanism

1. Who Can File a Complaint?

Any individual who has experienced or witnessed harassment, abuse, or exploitation within the BFI's purview can file a complaint. This includes athletes, coaches, officials, support staff, volunteers, and family members.

2. Filing a Complaint

- **Formal Complaint:** Complaints should be submitted in writing to the SAHA Committee Chairperson. If the complainant is unable to write, the Chairperson will provide assistance.
- **Complaint Contents:** The complaint should include:
 - Complainant's name, address, and contact information.
 - Respondent's name and, if known, their position within BFI.
 - Date, time, and location of the incident(s).
 - Detailed description of the incident(s).
 - Names and contact information of any witnesses.

- Any supporting evidence (e.g., emails, messages, photos).
 - The desired resolution or outcome.
- **Time Limit:** Complaints should be filed within three months of the incident, or the last incident in a series. The SAHA Committee may extend this timeframe under exceptional circumstances.

3. Procedure on Receiving a Complaint

- **Acknowledgement:** The SAHA Committee Chairperson will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and inform the complainant of the available options, which may include:
 - **Conciliation:** An attempt to resolve the issue informally between the parties involved.
 - **Warning:** Issuing a general warning to relevant personnel without disclosing identities.
 - **Police Report:** Filing a report with law enforcement.
 - **Formal Inquiry:** Conducting a formal investigation.
- **Conciliation:** If both parties agree, the SAHA Committee may facilitate conciliation. If successful, a written agreement will be signed and submitted to BFI. No monetary settlements will be permitted. If conciliation fails, a formal inquiry may proceed.

4. Inquiry Process

- **Completeness:** The Chairperson will ensure the complaint is complete and provide the complainant with an opportunity to provide any missing information.
- **Respondent Notification:** The Respondent will receive a copy of the complaint and be given ten working days to submit a written response.
- **Investigation:** The SAHA Committee will conduct a thorough investigation, which may include:
 - Interviewing the Complainant and Respondent.
 - Interviewing witnesses.
 - Reviewing documents and evidence.
- **Confidentiality:** All proceedings will be kept confidential.
- **Principles of Natural Justice:** Both parties will be given a fair opportunity to present their case.
- **Ex-parte Decisions:** If a party fails to appear for three consecutive hearings without reasonable cause, the Committee may proceed with an ex-parte decision after providing 15 days' written notice.
- **Protection of Witnesses:** Measures will be taken to protect witnesses from retaliation.
- **No Legal Representation:** Parties will not be allowed legal representation during the inquiry.
- **Irrelevant Information:** The Complainant's past sexual history will not be considered.
- **Quorum:** At least three SAHA Committee members, including the Chairperson, must be present for all hearings.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Any Committee member with a conflict of interest must recuse themselves from the case.

5. Reporting of Findings

- **Timeframe:** The SAHA Committee will aim to complete its investigation within 90 days.

- **Report:** A written report with findings and recommendations will be submitted to the BFI President within ten days of the inquiry's conclusion. Copies will be provided to both parties.
- **Witness Anonymity:** The Committee may conceal witness identities in the report at their request.

6. Recommendations and Actions

- **Possible Recommendations:** The SAHA Committee may recommend:
 - Warning letter
 - Written reprimand
 - Apology
 - Counseling or community service
 - Suspension
 - Withholding of promotion or increments
 - Financial compensation to the Complainant
 - Dismissal or removal from the team
- BFI will make a final decision on the recommendations within 30 days of receiving the report, unless an appeal is filed.

7. Appeals

Either party can appeal the SAHA Committee's findings to the BFI President within 30 days. **Final Decision:** The BFI President's decision on the appeal is final.

8. False Complaints

Individuals who knowingly file false complaints or provide false testimony may face disciplinary action.

No Discouragement of Reporting: This provision is not intended to discourage legitimate complaints.

9. Committee

The Boxing Federation of India has established an Internal Complaints Committee to address sexual harassment and misconduct.

ICC Members:

- Dr. Tadang Minu, Presiding Officer
- Adv. Vrinda Bhandari, External Member (Subject Expert with Legal Knowledge)
- Mr. Hemanta Kumar Kalita, Member
- Ms. Danuska D'Gama, Member
- Ms. Manisha Malhotra, Member (NGO. IIS)
- Ms. Lovlina Borgohain, Member (Athlete Representative)
- Mr. Anil Kumar Bohidar, Member

Report concerns confidentially to icc@boxingfederation.in .

The BFI is committed to a safe and respectful environment.