

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL RECONSTRUCTION CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (hereinafter referred to as IIRR) pledges to undertake its programs and projects with an absolute intention to protect every child from any form of abuse, exploitation, neglect or any kind of violence. All IIRR staff, volunteers, partners, and donors acknowledge the moral and legal obligation in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and are expected to observe the highest standards of behavior and provide them with the highest possible standard of care, warranting practices that reflect lawful responsibilities, in compliance with best practices and adheres to the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) 1989 and the Declaration of Human Rights 1948. These are the best interest of the child, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, respect for child opinion in matters affecting him/her, the participation of the child.

IIRR has zero-tolerance for child abuse and regards this policy as preeminent. It is committed to providing the necessary resources that ensure observance of local, national and global child protection laws and regulations and to maintaining a child-safe environment.

Definition of a Child and Child Abuse:

Child: Any person under the physical age of 18.

Child Abuse: the willful and unjustifiable infliction of pain and suffering on children. It can take many different forms. These include sexual, physical abuse, emotional abuse, physical and emotional neglect (see annex 1).

II. POLICY STATEMENT

IIRR recognizes the importance of following procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate staff and authorities.

IIRR and its entire staff share the responsibility and have the obligation to:

1. Promote and prioritize the physical, emotional and psychological safety and wellbeing of children and young people at all times.
2. Promote a culture where young children and young people are treated with dignity, equality, and respect.
3. Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of protecting children and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognize, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people.
4. Report concerns to the appropriate person, normally the Designated Safeguarding persons or to the Country Directors. An incident report must be sent

to the appropriate persons within 24 hours with the following details: date, time, and location of the incident; detailed narration of the incident; and immediate actions done by the representative if any.

5. Ensure quick and appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support is provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern.
6. Ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
7. Ensure privacy and confidentiality of a child's information. All photos and videos of children must portray them in a manner that gives them dignity and evokes feelings of hope, joy, respect, and compassion. All published images (online and print) of children must not contain their full names, address, and other personal information.

IIRR shall secure an informed consent form from the scholars and their parents to signify their agreement for the use of their photos and videos in published materials.

8. Prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals.
9. Ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.
10. Ensure that this policy is disseminated to all staff, read by all staff and understood by all staff.

Role of Duty of Line Managers:

1. To report and record any incident of concern about child protection to the appropriate child protection agency.
2. To ensure staff are aware of, and provide an introduction to, as well as have access to Child and Human Rights documents.
3. To ensure that staff are aware of procedures for reporting concerns and their responsibilities in reporting
4. To ensure community and children are aware of and have easy access to reporting authorities and procedures for reporting concerns and complaints.
5. To ensure parental or guardian consent is sought for any activity with a child and encourage parental participation in all activities involving children.
6. To ensure parental or guardian consent is sought before taking any images or footage of children. Ensure that the parent or guardian understands the purpose of this activity and how the images or footage will be used.
7. Be aware of situations which may present risks and ensure these are supervised appropriately
8. To empower children; discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem

Role of Country Directors:

1. Be aware of the local law applying to child protection and the agencies responsible and provide this information to all staff.
2. Establish a systematic method for reporting and investigating suspected cases of abuse and exploitation.
3. Ensure that disciplinary procedures are in place and are strictly implemented if staff members found to have violated the Child Protection Policy.
4. Ensure every staff undergoes orientation and training on how to recognize child abuse and exploitation and take appropriate action.

The Role of Human Resources:

1. Ensure this Child Protection policy is included in the offer letter to all new employees and all IIRR Board members. As part of the acceptance procedure, employees will be asked to sign a declaration of the policy stating that they are aware of its existence and will abide/adhere to it.
2. Ensure that roles and responsibilities regarding child protection are incorporated into job descriptions.

III. GUIDELINES IN DEALING WITH CHILDREN

Staff and partners must be aware of the following actions considered inappropriate and potentially or otherwise abusive and must avoid at all costs:

1. Spend unnecessary time alone with children.
2. Take children home, particularly if they will be alone with staff unless they are acting to protect the children.
3. Inappropriately use of children to solicit support, financial or otherwise.
4. Promote any form of child labor – exploitative or otherwise.
5. Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children.
6. Develop physical/sexual relationships with children
7. Develop any form of relationship with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive and act in ways that may be abusive
8. Place a child at risk of abuse or exploitation, be aware of these and not do anything about it
9. Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
10. Behave physically in a manner, which is inappropriate or sexually provocative to children.
11. Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home without others being present
12. Act in ways that shame, humiliate or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.

Children with Special Needs:

- Extra-care must be made not to discriminate against children with special needs, such as the disabled (physical and mentally impaired), orphaned and vulnerable children in all community programs.
- Staff must take appropriate steps to ensure equal opportunity for participation of children with disabilities in matters pertaining to their rights and protection from abuse and exploitation
- Staff must ensure that community and other children do not stigmatize or discriminate against children with special needs
- Staff must be required to exercise caution and sensitivity in handling information about children with special needs and shall ensure that information collected is not used to solicit sympathy.

ANNEX 1: Forms of Child Abuse and Exploitation:

Child abuse may take five (5) different forms.

- 1.) *Sexual Abuse and Harassment*: these are acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors by parents, caregivers or strangers. Exploitation occurs if an adult perpetrated the activity on a child and/or involved the misuse of power, services, age or authority, or the use of physical force or emotional manipulation by children of the opposite sex from a peer group. This can also include exposure or failure to prevent the exposure of children to all forms of pornography and sexual acts.
- 2.) *Physical Abuse and Harassment*: any direct physical assault and injury by parents, caretakers or strangers on a child, which are not the result of an accident. It may include cuts, fractures, bruises, shaking, burns and internal injuries. This may also include tasks and errands, which clearly exceed the capacity of the child to manage safely.
- 3.) *Emotional Abuse*: Emotional abuse is a chronic pattern of behavior and psychological ill-treatment such as belittling, humiliating and ridiculing a child which results in a severe impact upon a child's behavior and development. It is also a consistent failure to provide a child with appropriate support, attention, and affection.
- 4.) *Physical Neglect*: is the failure to provide children with adequate food, clothing, shelter and medical care. And also includes abandonment, expulsion from home and failure to enroll children in school
- 5.) *Emotional Neglect*: intentional and reckless disregard of a child's emotional needs.

WHO IS COVERED BY THIS POLICY:

This policy applies to all staff of IIRR and to any contractors engaged by the organization either on a voluntary or paid basis.

This policy is applicable to all IIRR Centers - the Country Director is responsible for reviewing and updating the policy for their offices in line with local conditions on an annual basis at a minimum, or more frequently if required.