



Safeguarding Policy

ICRW AFRICA



Introduction

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is dedicated to advancing the rights and opportunities of women, girls, and gender-marginalized individuals through actionable evidence and solutions. Guided by our vision of “An equitable, sustainable, and prosperous world where women, girls, and gender marginalized people lead progress and thrive,” ICRW collaborates with partners to conduct empirical research, build capacity, and advocate for evidence-based, practical changes in policies and programs.

Our values—Intersectional feminism, Inclusivity, Learning, and Impact—serve as the foundation for our internal and external operations, shaping our decisions and interactions with our community, partners, and each other. We are committed to upholding these values through a safeguarding lens.

ICRW Africa is unwavering in its commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive work environment for all individuals associated with our work. This includes staff, volunteers, partners, and beneficiaries, with a focus on preventing abuse. Prioritizing the safety and well-being of everyone involved, this policy provides guidance on identifying and mitigating risks and vulnerabilities related to workplace safety, environment, staff, and programs.

All staff members are expected to adhere to the outlined procedures to ensure the safety and security of ICRW staff and the communities we engage with.

The purpose of this policy is twofold:

1 Create a Safe Work Environment: Implement robust prevention and response measures internally and in the communities where we operate to establish a secure work environment.

2 Zero Tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA): Declare unequivocal zero tolerance for SEA among ICRW employees, volunteers, partners/associates, consultants, and related personnel. Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expected standards of conduct regarding SEA throughout ICRW Africa.

This policy aligns with previous ICRW policies related to human resources, preventing and responding to sexual abuse and exploitation. Additionally, it complements existing policies such as the Harassment and Discrimination Policy, Child Protection Policy, Whistle-blowers Policy, and Anti-Trafficking Policies.

Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct outlines expectations for the behavior of all ICRW representatives, associates, and stakeholders when working or interacting with children, adults at risk, and fellow staff.

Any violation of these provisions will result in disciplinary action.

Representatives shall:

- ✓ Demonstrate awareness of the rights of children and adults at risk, along with the provisions for their protection outlined in this code
- ✓ Obtain assent/consent (written or verbal, depending on the nature of interaction and associated risks) from children, adults, or their caregivers before involving them in any activity or capturing their photographs
- ✓ Strive to understand ICRW safeguarding policies, beliefs, and practices concerning interactions with children, adults at risk, and staff in various working contexts and communities, ensuring appropriateness in engagements
- ✓ Collaborate with associates, discuss plans and seek advice on safe interactions with children and adults at risk
- ✓ Organize workspaces for children and adults at risk participating in activities, ensuring cleanliness and safety
- ✓ Structure activities to avoid interference with children’s education, leisure, safety, and overall well-being
- ✓ Plan activities to not disrupt travel times for children, adults at risk, and staff returning home
- ✓ Equip children and adults at risk to share their stories with the media in a manner that protects their rights and dignity

► **If children or adults at risk need to travel from their homes to other locations for program-related activities such as meetings, conferences, or learning events, representatives shall:**

- ✓ Obtain written approval/consent from caregivers, assent from children, and consent from adults at risk for travel
- ✓ Ensure that children or adults at risk travel in mechanically sound transport, briefing transporters about safeguarding
- ✓ Provide adequate supervision during travel, including male chaperones for boys and female chaperones for girls
- ✓ Offer necessary assistance for adults at risk, especially those with disabilities, to enable their participation in activities

► **If staying overnight:**

- ✓ Ensure the welfare of children and adults at risk during overnight stays with appropriate meals and safe accommodations
- ✓ Implement guidelines to prevent bed-sharing among children and adults at risk, emphasizing their well-being and safety

► **When working with/interacting with children/adults at risk**

- ✓ **Begin by introducing yourself and clearly explaining your purpose in engaging with the children,** their caregivers, or adults at risk. Clearly communicate what information you intend to share, how you plan to share it, and with whom
- ✓ **Respect the rights of children and/or adults at risk throughout the interaction.** Acknowledge their autonomy and seek their explicit consent to participate. Allow them the freedom to choose whether to engage or not, and encourage them to express themselves in a language they understand and at a pace comfortable for them
- ✓ **Demonstrate utmost respect for their background, culture, beliefs, and practices.** It is imperative to avoid any biases or disdain towards children or adults at risk and their family settings. Embrace diversity and approach each individual with an open and non-judgmental mindset

► **Minimise Risks**



Do:

- Maintain professional boundaries with children/adults at risk and their families
- Work with children/adults at risk in open spaces where others can observe the interactions. Alternatively, engage in the presence of another adult to prevent seclusion and any suspicion that private conversations might be taking place
- Always teach children/adults at risk appropriate behaviour and how to protect themselves from abuse



Do not

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with a child or an adult at risk
- Engage in personal activities that intrude upon the privacy of children or adults at risk, particularly when individuals are capable of handling such matters independently.
- Employ children or involve them in personal work, chores, or errands
- Use anyone in forced, bonded or compulsory labour, including modern forms of slavery such as trafficking



It is imperative to avoid any biases or disdain towards children or adults at risk and their family settings. Embrace diversity and approach each individual with an open and non-judgmental mindset

► Appropriate behaviour



Do:

- Communicate with children and adults at risk in a respectful manner, using appropriate, positive and empowering language
- Refrain from inappropriate contact with children/adults at risk such as kissing, hugging and unnecessary closeness
- Treat children and/or adults at risk equally and with respect regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds
- Handle information about children and adults at risk safely/confidentially



Do not

- Expose a child or adult at risk to inappropriate content including, violence and pornography (pictures, text, videos, private parts)
- Use violent means to address inappropriate behavior
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children/adults at risk, or perpetuate emotional abuse (e.g., shouting, scolding, jeering, ignoring). Show preferential treatment to certain children or adults at risk in a way that excludes others
- Behave in a manner that is physically and sexually inappropriate. For instance, do not publicly display anger/disagreement or engage in physical fights with children and at-risk adults
- Share rooms with children/adults at risk or invite them to hotels/homes for visits/overnight stays unless in exceptional circumstances approved by parents/guardians (for children) and management of the various organizations



Refrain from inappropriate contact with children/adults at risk such as kissing, hugging and unnecessary closeness

- Give gifts or promise help directly to children, adults at risk, or their families. All gifts/promises of help should be channeled through partners working in a specific area
- Share personal contacts with children/adults at risk and/or caregivers unless it is for professional purposes known to and authorized by the management of various consortium partners
- Engage in sexual acts with children and adults at risk, including sexual relationships, using sexual language, or making sexual contact (kissing, hugging, body touches)
- Interact with children/adults at risk while under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicating substances
- Use language that is not age-appropriate, offensive, sexualized, or abusive.
- Condone or participate in activities and/or behavior that is abusive toward children or adults at risk

► Be proactive

- ✓ Be conscious of the fact that children and adults at risk are vulnerable to abuse. While interacting with them, identify signs (physical or behavioral) and take note of statements that could insinuate that abuse is taking place
- ✓ If you are in a group activity, do not interrogate a child/adult at risk there and then; but rather promise to talk about the issue privately with him/her

► Staff /consultant behavior outside work contexts

ICRW representatives and associates are expected to consistently demonstrate responsible behavior and actively protect the rights of children, adults at risk, and fellow staff at all times.

To fulfill this commitment, they are encouraged to:

- ✓ Respect and protect all children and adults at risk
- ✓ Treat spouses and other family members with respect and desist from being involved in domestic violence
- ✓ Treat other representatives and associates with respect and dignity
- ✓ Identify and report rights abuses in their own communities
- ✓ Be exemplary by showing appropriate safeguarding practice to community members

► Reporting

All ICRW Africa personnel must adhere to high standards of conduct. Reports of wrongdoing by staff or affiliated individuals are treated seriously. We strongly encourage you to report any instances of abuse or sexual exploitation that come to your attention in good faith.

ICRW Africa has three avenues for reporting cases of abuse or sexual exploitation:

Focal
Points via
focalpoint@icrw.org

Human
Resources

Helpline

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