



Children Relief Service (CRS)

Dzaleka Dowa, P.O Box 16 Dowa, Malawi

INCLUSION & NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Dignity. Respect. Equal Opportunity. Meaningful Participation.

Organization: Children Relief Service (CRS)

Location: Dzaleka-Lilambwe, Dowa District, Malawi

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1. Introduction

At Children Relief Service (CRS), we work with people from different backgrounds, circumstances, abilities, ages, and experiences.

In Dzaleka and surrounding communities, we see every day that people do not always have the same opportunities. Some children struggle to access education. Some young people face unemployment and limited opportunities to develop their skills. Some women and girls face violence, discrimination, or barriers to participation. People with disabilities may face physical, social, or communication barriers. Families experiencing poverty or other difficulties may also find it harder to access services and opportunities.

We believe that these circumstances should not determine a person's dignity, worth, or right to participate.

CRS is committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect and to promoting equal opportunities and meaningful participation regardless of circumstances, while giving particular attention to people facing greater vulnerability or barriers.

Inclusion for us is not simply about allowing people to be present. It means listening to people, understanding the barriers they face, creating opportunities for meaningful participation, and making reasonable efforts to ensure that our programmes reach people who may otherwise be left behind.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to guide CRS in creating an environment where people are treated fairly, respectfully, and with dignity.

The policy aims to:

- Promote inclusion and equal opportunities
- Prevent discrimination and exclusion
- Respect the dignity and rights of every person
- Encourage meaningful participation in CRS programmes
- Identify and reduce barriers that prevent participation
- Give appropriate attention to people facing greater vulnerability
- Promote fairness in access to CRS services and opportunities
- Strengthen respectful relationships within CRS and the communities we serve

3. Scope

This policy applies to everyone working with or representing CRS, including:

- Board members
- Founder & Executive Director
- Staff members
- Programme officers
- Volunteers
- Interns and trainees
- Consultants and technical advisors
- Community workers
- Partners and representatives working with CRS

It applies to all CRS programmes, activities, recruitment processes, training opportunities, community engagement, partnerships, communications, and organizational decision-making.

4. Our Commitment to Equal Dignity

At CRS, we believe that every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

A person's circumstances should never be used as a reason to humiliate, exclude, insult, exploit, or unfairly deny them an opportunity.

We work with people who may have very different life experiences. Some are refugees, some are members of host communities, and some face poverty, displacement, disability, limited education, protection risks, or other challenges.

We do not believe that these circumstances make anyone less deserving of respect.

Our programmes are designed to respond to needs and vulnerabilities, not to judge people's worth.

5. What We Mean by Inclusion

Inclusion means making a genuine effort to ensure that people can participate and benefit from opportunities provided through CRS.

This may involve:

- Listening to community members
- Understanding barriers to participation
- Making activities accessible where possible
- Providing information in understandable ways
- Considering the needs of people with disabilities
- Creating safe spaces for women, girls, children, and young people
- Encouraging people who are often left out to participate
- Adapting activities when reasonable and necessary
- Respecting different perspectives and experiences

We recognize that treating everyone fairly does not always mean treating everyone in exactly the same way.

Sometimes a person facing greater barriers needs additional support to have a genuine opportunity to participate.

6. People Who May Face Greater Barriers

CRS gives particular attention to people who may experience greater barriers to accessing protection, education, livelihoods, services, or participation.

This may include:

- Children at greater risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence
- Children with disabilities
- Adolescent mothers
- Girls and young women facing protection or social barriers
- Young people with limited access to education or employment
- Families experiencing severe economic hardship
- Refugees and members of surrounding host communities facing barriers to opportunities
- Survivors of gender-based violence
- People experiencing social exclusion
- People facing barriers related to disability, age, language, or other circumstances

This does not mean that everyone in these groups has the same needs.

CRS seeks to understand people as individuals and respond to their circumstances with dignity and respect.

7. Children and Inclusion

Children are at the heart of CRS's work.

Every child should have the opportunity to learn, develop, participate, and be protected, regardless of their circumstances.

We pay particular attention to children who may face additional barriers, including children with disabilities, children experiencing poverty, children who have experienced abuse or neglect, children whose education has been interrupted, and children facing other protection risks.

CRS will seek to create child-friendly environments where children are listened to, treated respectfully, and protected from discrimination, bullying, humiliation, exploitation, and abuse.

Children should also have opportunities to express their views in ways appropriate to their age and circumstances.

8. Inclusion of People with Disabilities

CRS recognizes that people with disabilities may face barriers that are created not by their disability itself but by the way environments, services, communication, and opportunities are organized.

We will therefore seek to identify and reduce reasonable barriers to participation.

Where possible, CRS will consider:

- Physical accessibility
- Communication needs
- Accessible learning approaches
- Participation in community activities
- Equal access to training opportunities
- Respectful communication
- Protection from stigma and discrimination

We also recognize that CRS may not always have the resources to remove every barrier immediately.

Where a barrier cannot be addressed at once, we will seek practical solutions within our available capacity and work toward improving accessibility over time.

9. Gender Equality and Participation

CRS is committed to promoting the meaningful participation of women and girls.

Women and girls should be able to participate in programmes, training, community activities, leadership opportunities, and decision-making without discrimination, intimidation, or harassment.

We also recognize the importance of engaging men and boys in building respectful relationships, preventing violence, and creating safer communities.

Our commitment to gender equality is connected to our wider work in girls' empowerment and GBV prevention and response.

10. Refugee and Host Community Inclusion

CRS is rooted in Dzaleka and works alongside both refugee and host communities.

We recognize the importance of building relationships across communities and avoiding approaches that create unnecessary divisions.

Where programmes are designed to serve particular groups based on identified needs, CRS will communicate the purpose of the programme clearly and seek to ensure that selection processes are fair, transparent, and respectful.

We believe that working together can strengthen trust, reduce misunderstanding, and create opportunities that benefit communities more broadly.

11. Participation in CRS Programmes

People should have meaningful opportunities to participate in programmes that affect their lives.

CRS seeks to involve community members in appropriate ways through:

- Community discussions
- Consultations
- Feedback
- Programme activities
- Training
- Community outreach
- Volunteer opportunities
- Monitoring and learning
- Other appropriate participation mechanisms

Participation should not be limited to people who are already confident or well connected.

We will make reasonable efforts to listen to people whose voices are less often heard.

12. Fairness in Access to Opportunities

CRS may provide different programmes and opportunities according to identified needs, available resources, programme objectives, and eligibility criteria.

Where selection is required, CRS will seek to use clear and reasonable criteria.

Selection should not be based on personal favoritism, discrimination, political influence, personal relationships, or other inappropriate considerations.

Where possible, people should understand why an opportunity is available and what criteria are used to determine participation.

13. Non-Discrimination

CRS does not tolerate unfair discrimination in its programmes or organizational activities.

Discrimination may include treating a person unfairly, excluding them, humiliating them, denying them an opportunity, or subjecting them to harmful treatment because of their circumstances or characteristics.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect.

It can also happen through words, behavior, decisions, policies, exclusion from activities, harassment, bullying, or creating unnecessary barriers to participation.

CRS staff and representatives are expected to recognize and challenge discriminatory behavior rather than ignore it.

14. Respectful Communication

The way we speak to people matters.

CRS staff, volunteers, and representatives should communicate with people respectfully and avoid language that humiliates, stereotypes, labels, or devalues them.

We should be especially careful when communicating about children, people with disabilities, survivors, refugees, people experiencing poverty, and other people whose circumstances may expose them to stigma.

A person's situation should never become a reason to speak about them as though they are less important or less capable.

15. Recruitment and Working Environment

CRS seeks to promote fairness and respect within its own organization.

Where recruitment or selection processes are undertaken, decisions should be based on relevant qualifications, skills, experience, responsibilities, organizational needs, and other legitimate criteria.

Staff, volunteers, and other representatives should be treated with dignity and respect.

CRS will seek to maintain a working environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation, and other inappropriate conduct.

16. Preventing Harassment and Bullying

Discrimination and exclusion can sometimes appear through repeated jokes, insults, humiliation, intimidation, unwanted comments, or deliberately excluding someone.

CRS does not consider such behavior acceptable simply because it is described as a joke or part of normal interaction.

Staff, volunteers, and representatives should speak up when they see behavior that undermines another person's dignity or creates an unsafe environment.

Concerns should be raised through appropriate CRS reporting channels.

17. Inclusion in Communications and Publicity

CRS seeks to communicate about communities and programme participants respectfully.

When photographs, videos, stories, or other materials are used in CRS communications, we will seek to avoid stereotypes and portray people with dignity.

We will not intentionally present people as helpless, inferior, or incapable simply to attract attention or sympathy.

Our communications should recognize people's strengths, resilience, abilities, contributions, and aspirations as well as the challenges they face.

18. Community Feedback

People should have an opportunity to tell CRS when they feel excluded, unfairly treated, or unable to participate.

CRS encourages community members, programme participants, staff, volunteers, and partners to raise concerns.

Feedback may help us identify barriers that we did not previously recognize.

We will seek to listen without retaliation and use appropriate feedback to improve our programmes and organizational practices.

19. Reporting Discrimination or Exclusion

Anyone who experiences or witnesses serious discrimination, harassment, exclusion, or other inappropriate treatment connected to CRS should report the concern through appropriate CRS channels.

Concerns may be reported to:

Children Relief Service (CRS)

Dzaleka-Lilambwe, Dowa District, Malawi

Email: info@childrenreliefmalawi.org

Phone/WhatsApp: +265 993 73 45 42

Where a concern involves child protection, GBV, sexual exploitation or abuse, or another safeguarding issue, it should also be handled under the appropriate CRS safeguarding procedures.

20. No Retaliation

People should not be punished, threatened, intimidated, or disadvantaged simply because they raise a genuine concern about discrimination, exclusion, harassment, or inappropriate treatment.

CRS encourages responsible reporting because identifying problems gives us an opportunity to address them and improve the way we work.

False or deliberately malicious allegations may be addressed appropriately, but genuine concerns should be taken seriously and handled respectfully.

21. Responsibilities of Staff and Volunteers

Everyone representing CRS has a responsibility to promote inclusion and prevent discrimination.

Staff and volunteers are expected to:

- Treat people with dignity and respect
- Avoid discriminatory behavior
- Listen to community members
- Respect different perspectives
- Avoid stereotypes and harmful language
- Identify and report serious concerns
- Support meaningful participation

- Protect people from humiliation and harassment
- Follow CRS safeguarding and other relevant policies
- Consider barriers that may prevent people from participating

22. Responsibilities of CRS Leadership

CRS leadership is responsible for promoting an organizational culture based on dignity, inclusion, fairness, and respect.

Leadership will seek to:

- Promote equal opportunities
- Address serious discrimination concerns
- Support inclusive programming
- Encourage community participation
- Strengthen awareness among staff and volunteers
- Consider accessibility and barriers during programme planning
- Review feedback from communities
- Take appropriate action when this policy is not followed

23. Our Approach to Inclusion

We know that inclusion is not achieved through a policy document alone.

It is built through the way we welcome a child into a learning activity, the way we speak to a parent during a community meeting, the way we support a girl who is facing barriers, the way we include a person with a disability, and the way we listen to people whose voices may not normally be heard.

For CRS, inclusion means asking who is missing, why they may be missing, and what we can reasonably do to make participation possible.

It also means recognizing that communities have knowledge and strengths of their own.

We do not come into communities believing that we have all the answers. We listen, learn, work alongside people, and seek practical solutions together.

24. Our Commitment

At Children Relief Service, we believe that every person has dignity and deserves respect.

We know that poverty, displacement, disability, gender, age, education, social circumstances, and other barriers can affect a person's ability to access opportunities.

Our responsibility is not to ignore these differences. It is to understand them and work to ensure that people are not left behind because of barriers that can reasonably be addressed.

We are committed to building programmes and relationships where people feel respected, heard, included, and valued.

Everyone matters. Everyone deserves dignity. Everyone should have the opportunity to participate and contribute.

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Policy Status: Organizational Policy

Review: Periodic review or when significant changes occur

Applies To: Board Members, Staff, Volunteers, Consultants, Advisors, Interns, and Representatives of CRS