



Children Relief Service (CRS)

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Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy

Established: 11 May 2017

Policy Location: Dzaleka-Lilambwe, Dowa District, Malawi

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1. INTRODUCTION

Children Relief Service (CRS) is a community-focused nonprofit organization committed to protecting children, empowering youth and girls, fighting hunger, strengthening food security, and building resilient refugee and host communities through sustainable, community-led development.

CRS recognizes that the people we serve may face heightened risks of exploitation, abuse, discrimination, violence, and unequal power relationships. Children, women, persons with disabilities, refugees, and other vulnerable people may be particularly exposed to such risks.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by humanitarian, development, programme, or organizational personnel is a serious violation of human rights, dignity, organizational trust, and the principles upon which CRS operates.

CRS therefore maintains **zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse** and is committed to preventing misconduct, responding appropriately to concerns, protecting affected persons, and holding perpetrators accountable.

This Policy establishes the organizational framework through which CRS prevents and responds to sexual exploitation and abuse.

It should be read together with the **CRS Constitution and Bylaws, Professional Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding and Protection policies, Complaints and Feedback Mechanism, and other relevant organizational policies.**

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Prevent sexual exploitation and abuse within CRS programmes and operations.
- Protect children, women, men, and vulnerable people from SEA.

- Establish clear responsibilities for preventing and responding to SEA.
- Provide safe and accessible channels for reporting concerns.
- Ensure concerns and allegations are treated seriously and handled appropriately.
- Promote a culture of dignity, respect, accountability, and safeguarding.
- Strengthen community confidence and trust in CRS.
- Ensure that CRS personnel understand their responsibilities regarding PSEA.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to everyone working for, representing, supporting, or acting on behalf of CRS, including:

- Board members and trustees.
- Founder and Executive Director.
- Management and programme staff.
- Permanent, temporary, and casual staff.
- Volunteers and interns.
- Consultants and technical advisors.
- Contractors and service providers.
- Drivers, guards, and other support personnel.
- Partner organizations and their representatives.
- Any other person representing or participating in CRS activities.

The Policy applies during CRS programmes, community activities, training, meetings, official travel, field activities, online communication, and any other situation connected to CRS work.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including obtaining financial, social, political, or other benefits from another person's exploitation.

4.2 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse means an actual or threatened sexual intrusion or physical act of a sexual nature carried out by force, coercion, manipulation, or under unequal or coercive circumstances.

4.3 Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

SEA refers collectively to acts of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse committed by persons working for, representing, or associated with CRS.

4.4 Child

For the purposes of this Policy, a child is any person below the age of 18 years.

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CRS PSEA activities shall be guided by the following principles:

5.1 Zero Tolerance

CRS does not tolerate sexual exploitation or abuse. Allegations and concerns shall be taken seriously and addressed through appropriate procedures.

5.2 Best Interests of the Child

Where a child is involved, the safety, rights, dignity, and best interests of the child shall be given primary consideration.

5.3 Do No Harm

CRS shall take reasonable steps to ensure that its programmes and personnel do not create or increase risks of exploitation or abuse.

5.4 Dignity and Respect

Every person has the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and without discrimination.

5.5 Accountability

Everyone working with CRS is responsible for their conduct and for complying with this Policy and related organizational standards.

5.6 Confidentiality

Information concerning complaints, survivors, witnesses, and alleged perpetrators shall be handled responsibly and shared only with persons who have a legitimate need to know.

5.7 Survivor-Centered Approach

CRS will seek to ensure that survivors are treated with dignity, respect, compassion, confidentiality, and without discrimination.

5.8 Non-Retaliation

No person should face retaliation, intimidation, punishment, or disadvantage for reporting a concern in good faith or participating appropriately in a response process.

6. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

All CRS representatives are prohibited from:

- Engaging in sexual activity with anyone under 18 years of age.
- Exchanging money, employment, assistance, goods, services, opportunities, or other benefits for sexual activity.
- Using a person's vulnerability, poverty, dependency, or need for assistance for sexual purposes.
- Engaging in sexual exploitation or abuse of programme participants, beneficiaries, colleagues, volunteers, or community members.
- Using organizational authority or influence to pressure another person into sexual activity.
- Engaging in unwanted sexual touching, advances, comments, messages, or other sexual conduct.
- Using sexually exploitative, abusive, humiliating, or degrading language or material.
- Retaliating against a person who reports or participates in the investigation of SEA.
- Concealing, facilitating, or knowingly assisting acts of sexual exploitation or abuse.

Sexual conduct involving children is strictly prohibited regardless of local customs, cultural practices, or the legal age of consent.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRS

CRS shall take reasonable and appropriate measures to prevent and respond to SEA.

These measures include:

7.1 Safe Recruitment

CRS will seek to ensure that recruitment processes include appropriate safeguarding considerations, which may include:

- Verification of identity.
- Reference checks.
- Relevant background or screening checks where reasonably available and legally appropriate.
- Safeguarding-related interview questions.
- Confirmation that candidates understand CRS safeguarding expectations.

No person should be knowingly recruited into a role involving vulnerable people where credible information indicates that they present an unacceptable safeguarding risk.

7.2 Code of Conduct

Relevant CRS personnel must receive and acknowledge the CRS Professional Code of Conduct and comply with its safeguarding and PSEA requirements.

7.3 Training

CRS will promote appropriate induction and periodic training on:

- PSEA.
- Child safeguarding.

- Professional boundaries.
- Reporting responsibilities.
- Complaints and feedback mechanisms.
- Survivor-centered response.
- Safe communication and information handling.

7.4 Safe Programme Design

CRS will seek to identify and reduce SEA risks within programme planning and implementation.

Programme teams should consider:

- Safe locations.
- Appropriate staff-to-participant arrangements.
- Safe interaction between adults and children.
- Community awareness.
- Accessible reporting channels.
- Risks associated with distributions, assistance, recruitment, transportation, and other programme activities.

8. COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

CRS recognizes that communities must understand their rights and know how to safely raise concerns.

CRS will seek to:

- Inform communities about expected standards of conduct.
- Explain that assistance and services must never be exchanged for sexual favors.
- Provide accessible information about reporting mechanisms.
- Consider language, literacy, disability, age, and other barriers to reporting.
- Encourage safe community participation in safeguarding activities.
- Promote awareness among children and caregivers about appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Community members should never be required to provide money, sexual favors, personal relationships, or other inappropriate benefits in exchange for CRS assistance or services.

9. REPORTING MECHANISMS

CRS will maintain appropriate channels through which concerns about SEA can be reported.

Depending on the circumstances, reporting channels may include:

- Designated safeguarding or PSEA focal persons.
- CRS management.
- Complaints and feedback mechanisms.
- Complaint boxes.

- Official CRS communication channels.
- Other confidential reporting mechanisms established by CRS.

Reports should be made as soon as reasonably possible.

A person does not need to prove that misconduct occurred before raising a genuine safeguarding concern.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION PROTECTION

CRS will handle reports and related information with appropriate confidentiality.

Personnel receiving a complaint shall:

- Listen respectfully.
- Avoid unnecessary questioning.
- Avoid promising a particular outcome.
- Record only information necessary for appropriate follow-up.
- Share information only with authorized persons who have a legitimate need to know.
- Protect the identity and privacy of affected persons as far as reasonably possible.

Confidentiality does not prevent CRS from taking necessary safeguarding, legal, or protective action.

11. SURVIVOR-CENTERED RESPONSE

Where a survivor or affected person comes forward, CRS will seek to ensure that the response respects:

- Safety.
- Dignity.
- Confidentiality.
- Informed choice.
- Non-discrimination.
- Privacy.
- Access to appropriate support.

Where appropriate and available, CRS may facilitate referrals to relevant:

- Medical services.
- Psychosocial support.
- Protection services.
- Legal assistance.
- Child protection services.
- Other specialized support.

CRS will not require survivors to participate in an investigation as a condition of receiving appropriate support.

12. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

CRS will seek to respond to allegations promptly, fairly, and appropriately.

Depending on the nature of the concern, CRS may:

- Conduct an initial assessment.
- Take immediate steps to reduce risks.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate safeguarding or management mechanism.
- Conduct or commission an appropriate investigation.
- Take administrative or disciplinary action where misconduct is established.
- Refer matters to relevant authorities where required by law or necessary for protection.
- Maintain appropriate records.

Investigations should be conducted by persons with appropriate authority and, where necessary, suitable competence and independence.

13. NON-RETALIATION

CRS prohibits retaliation against any person who:

- Reports a concern in good faith.
- Supports a survivor.
- Provides relevant information.
- Participates appropriately in an investigation.
- Raises a safeguarding or protection concern.

Retaliation may itself constitute misconduct and may result in disciplinary or other appropriate action.

14. FALSE OR MALICIOUS REPORTS

CRS encourages good-faith reporting and will not penalize a person simply because an allegation cannot be substantiated.

However, knowingly making a deliberately false or malicious allegation may constitute misconduct and may be addressed through appropriate disciplinary procedures.

15. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board of Directors

The Board provides governance oversight and promotes organizational accountability for PSEA.

Its responsibilities include:

- Supporting a strong safeguarding culture.
- Providing oversight of implementation.

- Ensuring appropriate accountability mechanisms.
- Supporting appropriate action where serious misconduct is established.

Founder & Executive Director

The Executive Director provides organizational leadership for implementation of this Policy and shall:

- Promote a culture of zero tolerance for SEA.
- Ensure appropriate resources and systems are available.
- Support implementation and staff awareness.
- Ensure serious concerns are appropriately addressed.
- Promote accountability throughout the organization.

PSEA/Safeguarding Focal Person(s)

Designated focal persons may:

- Support awareness and training.
- Receive or facilitate reporting.
- Support appropriate referrals.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
- Help identify safeguarding risks.
- Support monitoring and follow-up.

Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors shall:

- Lead by example.
- Ensure staff understand relevant requirements.
- Promote safe working environments.
- Respond appropriately when concerns are raised.
- Escalate serious safeguarding concerns through appropriate channels.

Staff, Volunteers and Associates

All personnel are responsible for:

- Following this Policy.
- Maintaining professional boundaries.
- Preventing exploitative or abusive behavior.
- Reporting concerns.
- Cooperating appropriately with safeguarding processes.

Partners and Contractors

Partners and contractors working with CRS are expected to maintain safeguarding and PSEA standards consistent with this Policy and applicable contractual requirements.

16. BREACHES AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

A breach of this Policy may result in appropriate action depending on the seriousness of the conduct.

Possible measures include:

- Written or formal warning.
- Additional training or corrective measures.
- Suspension of duties.
- Removal from programme responsibilities.
- Termination of employment or volunteer engagement.
- Termination of contractual or partnership arrangements.
- Removal from organizational office in accordance with the CRS Constitution and Bylaws.
- Referral to relevant authorities where appropriate.

CRS will seek to ensure that disciplinary processes are fair and consistent with applicable organizational procedures and relevant law.

17. MONITORING AND REVIEW

CRS will periodically review the implementation and effectiveness of this Policy.

Monitoring may include:

- Review of staff and volunteer training.
- Review of reporting and complaints mechanisms.
- Safeguarding risk assessments.
- Programme monitoring.
- Community feedback.
- Review of lessons learned from safeguarding concerns.
- Periodic policy review.

The Policy should be reviewed when significant organizational, programme, legal, or safeguarding changes occur.

18. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CRS POLICIES

This PSEA Policy forms part of the CRS safeguarding and organizational accountability framework.

It should be implemented alongside:

- CRS Constitution and Bylaws.
- CRS Professional Code of Conduct.
- Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy.

- GBV Prevention and Response Policy.
- Complaints and Feedback Mechanism.
- Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Privacy and Data Protection Policy.
- Financial and Procurement Policies.
- Other relevant CRS policies and procedures.

The Professional Code of Conduct establishes expected individual behavior, while this Policy provides the organizational framework for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse.

19. POLICY COMMITMENT

Children Relief Service (CRS) is committed to maintaining an environment in which children, vulnerable people, staff, volunteers, partners, and community members are treated with dignity and protected from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Protecting people from exploitation and abuse is a responsibility shared by everyone connected to CRS.

CRS will continue to strengthen prevention, awareness, safe reporting, accountability, and community participation so that safeguarding remains an essential part of every programme and organizational activity.

20. APPROVAL AND ADOPTION

This Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy is adopted as an official organizational policy of Children Relief Service (CRS).

Approved by: Board of Directors / Authorized CRS Governance Body

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Official CRS Seal (where applicable):

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I confirm that I have received, read, and understood the Children Relief Service (CRS) Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy.

I understand my responsibility to comply with this Policy and to report concerns through appropriate CRS reporting mechanisms.

Full Name: _____

Position/Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____