



CRS
Children Relief Service

Children Relief Service (CRS)

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Professional Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

Established: 11 May 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

Children Relief Service (CRS) is a refugee-led nonprofit organization committed to protecting vulnerable 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 every person has the right to dignity, safety, respect, and protection from abuse, exploitation, discrimination, harassment, and violence.

This Professional Code of Conduct establishes the standards of behavior expected from everyone working with or representing CRS. It is intended to protect children, vulnerable persons, staff, volunteers, programme participants, partners, and communities while promoting integrity, accountability, professionalism, and trust.

CRS has **zero tolerance for child abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment, gender-based violence (GBV), exploitation, discrimination, fraud, corruption, and other forms of misconduct.**

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Code is to:

- Establish clear standards of professional and ethical conduct.
- Protect children and vulnerable people from harm, abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
- Prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, and gender-based violence.
- Promote dignity, equality, inclusion, and respect.
- Strengthen accountability and responsible use of CRS resources.
- Ensure that concerns and allegations are handled appropriately and confidentially.

- Promote a safe and trusted environment for communities, staff, volunteers, and partners.
- Support CRS's mission, values, policies, and safeguarding commitments.

3. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This Code applies to all persons working for, representing, supporting, or acting on behalf of CRS, including:

- Board members and organizational leaders.
- The Founder & Executive Director and senior management.
- Programme and technical staff.
- Permanent, temporary, casual, and contract staff.
- Interns and trainees.
- Volunteers and community volunteers.
- Consultants and technical advisors.
- Contractors and service providers.
- Partner organizations and representatives.
- Any other person acting on behalf of CRS.

Partners, contractors, and service providers are expected to comply with this Code or maintain equivalent standards that meet or exceed its requirements.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All persons covered by this Code shall be guided by the following principles:

Integrity — Act honestly, transparently, and responsibly.

Respect and Dignity — Treat every person with respect and protect their dignity.

Child-Centered Protection — Put the safety, rights, dignity, and best interests of children at the center of our work.

Do No Harm — Avoid actions or decisions that may cause physical, emotional, social, or other forms of harm.

Equality and Inclusion — Treat people fairly and without discrimination.

Accountability — Accept responsibility for decisions, conduct, and use of organizational resources.

Confidentiality — Protect personal, safeguarding, programme, and organizational information.

Community Participation — Listen to communities and respect their voices, rights, culture, and participation.

Collaboration — Work respectfully and constructively with colleagues, partners, authorities, and communities.

5. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

All CRS representatives shall:

- Perform their responsibilities honestly, professionally, and diligently.
- Treat colleagues, programme participants, partners, and community members with respect.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Follow CRS policies, procedures, safeguarding requirements, and lawful instructions.
- Protect confidential organizational and personal information.
- Declare actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Use CRS property, funds, equipment, information, and other resources responsibly.
- Avoid fraud, bribery, corruption, favoritism, theft, and misuse of organizational resources.
- Maintain professional behavior when representing CRS in the community, workplace, online, or during travel and events.
- Avoid conduct that could damage the reputation, credibility, or integrity of CRS.

6. CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION

Because child protection is central to the mission of CRS, all staff, volunteers, board members, and associates have a responsibility to protect children from harm.

They shall:

- Never abuse, exploit, neglect, or deliberately harm a child.
- Never engage in sexual activity with a person under 18 years of age.
- Never use children for personal, financial, political, or other inappropriate purposes.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with children.
- Avoid unnecessary situations where an adult is alone with a child in a private or inappropriate setting.
- Never use physical punishment, humiliating treatment, threats, or degrading language against children.
- Respect children's privacy, dignity, opinions, and rights.
- Obtain appropriate consent and follow CRS procedures when photographing, filming, interviewing, or publishing information about children.
- Never publish identifying or sensitive information about a child without appropriate authorization and safeguarding consideration.

- Immediately report concerns, allegations, or suspected abuse through the appropriate CRS reporting mechanism.

7. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

CRS strictly prohibits:

- Sexual exploitation or abuse of any person.
- Sexual harassment.
- Sexual activity with anyone under 18 years of age.
- Exchanging money, employment, goods, services, assistance, protection, or other benefits for sexual activity.
- Any form of “sex-for-aid.”
- Sexual relationships with programme participants where a position of authority, influence, or power imbalance may compromise consent or professional boundaries.
- Sexual comments, gestures, messages, images, jokes, or behavior that are unwanted, inappropriate, humiliating, or degrading.
- Threatening, coercing, manipulating, or exploiting another person for sexual purposes.
- Retaliation against anyone who reports a concern or supports a safeguarding process.

8. RESPECT, NON-DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

CRS is committed to an inclusive environment in which everyone is treated fairly and with dignity.

No person working with or representing CRS shall discriminate against or harass another person on the basis of characteristics protected by applicable law or organizational policy.

Bullying, intimidation, threats, humiliation, verbal abuse, unwanted sexual conduct, and other forms of harassment are prohibited.

9. USE OF POWER AND POSITION

CRS representatives must never misuse their authority or position.

They shall not:

- Use their position to obtain personal benefits.
- Threaten or pressure programme participants.
- Manipulate vulnerable people for personal, financial, political, or other advantage.
- Give preferential treatment in exchange for personal benefits.
- Use CRS services or resources as leverage for personal relationships or favors.
- Exploit differences in authority, age, economic status, or access to services.

People receiving assistance must never be required to provide money, gifts, sexual favors, employment, or personal benefits in exchange for CRS services or assistance.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION PROTECTION

All persons covered by this Code must protect confidential information obtained through their work.

Confidential information shall not be:

- Shared with unauthorized persons.
- Used for personal benefit.
- Published on social media without authorization.
- Disclosed to the media without appropriate authorization.
- Used to identify or expose survivors, children, complainants, or other vulnerable persons.

Information concerning safeguarding complaints must only be shared with people who have a legitimate need to know and in accordance with CRS procedures and applicable law.

11. PHOTOGRAPHY, MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

CRS representatives must use photographs, videos, stories, and personal information responsibly.

They shall:

- Respect the dignity and privacy of programme participants.
- Obtain appropriate consent before taking or publishing photographs, videos, or stories.
- Follow CRS safeguarding requirements concerning children and vulnerable persons.
- Never publish humiliating, degrading, sexualized, or otherwise harmful images.
- Never reveal confidential information about survivors or safeguarding cases.
- Not use CRS's name, logo, photographs, or official communication channels for unauthorized personal purposes.
- Ensure that public communication accurately represents CRS and does not mislead the public.

12. FINANCIAL INTEGRITY AND USE OF RESOURCES

CRS resources must be used solely for legitimate organizational purposes.

Fraud, theft, bribery, corruption, falsification of records, unauthorized expenditure, misuse of funds, and other financial misconduct are prohibited.

All financial transactions must be properly authorized, documented, recorded, and subject to CRS financial procedures and applicable requirements.

13. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest may occur when a person's personal, family, financial, or other interests could influence, or appear to influence, their responsibilities to CRS.

Anyone covered by this Code must disclose an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest to the appropriate CRS authority.

Individuals must not use their position, confidential information, or organizational resources to obtain improper personal or family benefits.

14. REPORTING CONCERNS AND MISCONDUCT

Everyone covered by this Code has a responsibility to report suspected or known violations, particularly concerns involving:

- Child abuse or neglect.
- Sexual exploitation or abuse.
- Gender-based violence.
- Sexual harassment.
- Serious misconduct.
- Fraud or corruption.
- Misuse of CRS resources.
- Threats, retaliation, or abuse of authority.

Reports should be made through the safeguarding focal point, designated CRS leadership, complaint/feedback mechanism, or another approved reporting channel.

Where possible and safe, reports should be made promptly.

No person should investigate an allegation independently or attempt to punish an alleged offender.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY, NON-RETALIATION AND SURVIVOR-CENTERED RESPONSE

CRS will seek to handle complaints and safeguarding concerns with confidentiality, dignity, fairness, and respect.

CRS prohibits retaliation against a person who, in good faith:

- Reports a concern.

- Makes a complaint.
- Provides information.
- Participates in an investigation or review.
- Supports a survivor or affected person.

Where appropriate and available, CRS will facilitate referrals to relevant medical, psychosocial, legal, protection, or other support services.

False allegations made deliberately and maliciously may constitute misconduct. However, a report made in good faith will not be treated as misconduct simply because it cannot be substantiated.

16. INVESTIGATION AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

CRS will take allegations of misconduct seriously and will respond in accordance with its policies, procedures, applicable law, and principles of fairness and due process.

Where an allegation is substantiated, appropriate action may include:

- Counseling or corrective action.
- Formal warning.
- Suspension.
- Removal from responsibilities.
- Termination of employment or engagement.
- Termination of volunteer or organizational affiliation.
- Disqualification from future engagement with CRS.
- Referral to appropriate authorities where required or appropriate.

Nothing in this Code prevents CRS from cooperating with lawful investigations by relevant authorities.

17. RESPONSIBILITIES

Board of Directors

Provides governance oversight and ensures that CRS maintains appropriate accountability, safeguarding, and ethical standards.

Founder & Executive Director

Provides organizational leadership, ensures implementation of this Code, allocates appropriate resources, and promotes a culture of accountability and protection.

Management and Programme Leadership

Ensures staff and volunteers understand and follow this Code and relevant CRS policies.

Safeguarding Focal Point(s)

Supports safeguarding awareness, reporting, referrals, documentation, and implementation of safeguarding procedures within their assigned responsibilities.

Staff, Volunteers and Associates

Must understand, follow, and uphold this Code and report concerns appropriately.

Partners and Service Providers

Must comply with applicable CRS safeguarding and ethical requirements and cooperate with reasonable accountability measures.

18. TRAINING AND AWARENESS

CRS will promote awareness of this Code through appropriate orientation, training, communication, and refresher activities.

Relevant personnel may be required to acknowledge their responsibilities under this Code before or during their engagement with CRS.

19. MONITORING AND REVIEW

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

Community feedback, safeguarding learning, organizational experience, legal developments, and recognized good practice may be considered when reviewing and updating the Code.

The Code should be reviewed periodically and updated when necessary.

20. COMMITMENT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I confirm that I have read and understood the Children Relief Service (CRS) Professional Code of Conduct.

I agree to uphold the standards contained in this Code and to conduct myself in a manner that protects children, vulnerable persons, colleagues, programme participants, and communities.

I understand that violations of this Code may result in disciplinary action, termination of my engagement with CRS, and/or referral to relevant authorities where appropriate.

Name: _____

Position/Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

21. EFFECTIVE DATE AND AUTHORITY

This Code of Conduct was established by Children Relief Service (CRS) and shall apply to all persons within its scope from the date of approval.

The Code shall be read together with the **CRS Constitution and Bylaws, Safeguarding Policies, Complaints and Feedback Mechanism, Privacy Policy, and other applicable CRS policies and procedures.**