



Children Relief Service (CRS)

Dzaleka Dowa, P.O Box 16 Dowa, Malawi

Phone: +265995618539, Email: info@childrenreliefmalawi.org

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Policy

Established: 11 May 2017

Organization: Children Relief Service (CRS)

Location: Dzaleka-Lilambwe, Dowa District, Malawi

Email: info@childrenreliefmalawi.org

Phone/WhatsApp: +265 993 73 45 42

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 communities through sustainable, community-led development.

CRS recognizes Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as a serious violation of human rights, dignity, safety, and equality. GBV can affect children, women, girls, men, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable individuals.

CRS is committed to preventing GBV and ensuring that everyone who comes into contact with the organization is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. This policy establishes the standards and responsibilities that guide CRS staff, volunteers, board members, partners, and others involved in CRS activities.

CRS maintains **zero tolerance for GBV, exploitation, abuse, harassment, and retaliation.**

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Prevent all forms of GBV within CRS programmes, activities, workplaces, and communities where CRS operates.
- Protect the safety, dignity, rights, and well-being of children, youth, women, men, and vulnerable persons.
- Establish clear responsibilities for preventing and responding to GBV.
- Provide safe and accessible mechanisms for reporting GBV concerns and incidents.
- Ensure that survivors are treated with dignity, confidentiality, compassion, and respect.

- Strengthen accountability among CRS staff, volunteers, leadership, partners, and associates.
- Promote community awareness and participation in GBV prevention.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All CRS staff, whether permanent, temporary, part-time, or contractual.
- Volunteers, interns, and community workers.
- Board members and organizational leaders.
- Consultants, contractors, and service providers.
- Technical advisors and other representatives acting on behalf of CRS.
- Partner organizations and their representatives when working with or on behalf of CRS.
- Visitors and other persons participating in CRS activities where applicable.

The policy applies to conduct occurring in CRS offices, programme locations, community activities, training sessions, events, field activities, online spaces, and other situations connected to CRS work.

4. UNDERSTANDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-Based Violence refers to harmful acts directed against a person because of their gender or acts that disproportionately affect people because of gender.

GBV may include:

- Physical violence or assault.
- Sexual violence and sexual abuse.
- Sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Emotional or psychological abuse.
- Sexual harassment.
- Intimate partner or domestic violence.
- Child marriage and other harmful practices.
- Economic or financial abuse.
- Forced or coerced sexual activity.
- Threats, intimidation, or controlling behavior.
- Any other harmful conduct recognized as GBV under applicable law and protection standards.

CRS recognizes that GBV may occur in homes, communities, institutions, workplaces, online environments, and humanitarian or development settings.

5. CORE PRINCIPLES

CRS's prevention and response to GBV shall be guided by the following principles:

Zero Tolerance:

GBV, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, harassment, and other forms of abuse are unacceptable.

Best Interests of the Child:

Where a child is involved, the safety, protection, dignity, and best interests of the child shall remain paramount.

Do No Harm:

CRS activities must be designed and implemented in ways that reduce risks and avoid causing further harm.

Dignity and Respect:

Every person shall be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.

Non-Discrimination:

Protection and services shall be provided fairly and without discrimination.

Confidentiality:

Information concerning survivors, complainants, and reported incidents shall be handled carefully and shared only with persons who have a legitimate need to know.

Survivor-Centered Approach:

Survivors shall be treated with respect and supported according to their wishes, safety, rights, and needs, while recognizing mandatory protection and reporting obligations under applicable law.

Accountability:

Individuals who violate this policy may face appropriate organizational, disciplinary, or legal consequences.

Non-Retaliation:

No person shall be punished, threatened, intimidated, or discriminated against for making a good-faith report or raising a safeguarding concern.

6. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

CRS strictly prohibits:

- Physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse.
- Sexual exploitation or sexual abuse.
- Sexual harassment.

- Sexual activity with anyone under 18 years of age.
- Exchanging money, employment, goods, services, assistance, or other benefits for sexual activity.
- Using a position of authority or influence to obtain sexual favors.
- Exploiting the vulnerability of programme participants.
- Threatening, intimidating, humiliating, or degrading another person.
- Discriminatory or abusive behavior.
- Retaliation against survivors, complainants, witnesses, or whistleblowers.
- Concealing, deliberately ignoring, or obstructing the reporting of serious GBV concerns.

7. PREVENTION MEASURES

CRS shall take reasonable measures to reduce the risk of GBV through:

Recruitment and Screening

CRS shall apply appropriate recruitment and screening procedures, including reference checks and safeguarding considerations, for staff, volunteers, and other relevant personnel.

Code of Conduct

Relevant CRS personnel shall be required to understand and comply with the CRS Professional Code of Conduct and applicable safeguarding standards.

Training and Awareness

CRS shall provide appropriate induction and periodic awareness or training on GBV prevention, safeguarding, PSEA, professional conduct, and reporting responsibilities.

Safe Programming

Programme planning shall consider GBV and safeguarding risks and incorporate reasonable measures to protect participants.

Community Awareness

CRS shall work with communities to increase awareness of GBV, rights, available support services, and safe reporting mechanisms.

8. REPORTING MECHANISMS

Any CRS staff member, volunteer, programme participant, community member, partner, or other person may report a GBV concern or incident.

Reports may be made through designated CRS reporting channels, including:

- A designated safeguarding or protection focal person.
- The Child Protection Officer or responsible supervisor.
- The CRS office.
- A designated complaints or feedback mechanism.
- A secure CRS communication channel established for safeguarding concerns.

Where possible, reporting mechanisms should be accessible, confidential, safe, and understandable to the communities CRS serves.

A person making a report should provide available information about the concern. However, a person should **not investigate the allegation themselves**.

9. RESPONSE TO GBV REPORTS

CRS shall respond to GBV concerns in a timely, respectful, and confidential manner.

The response may include:

- Immediate assessment of safety and protection needs.
- Appropriate referral to health, psychosocial, legal, child protection, or other relevant services.
- Appropriate safeguarding measures to prevent further harm.
- Confidential documentation of the concern.
- Internal administrative or disciplinary action where appropriate.
- Referral to competent authorities where required or appropriate under applicable law.
- Follow-up while respecting confidentiality and the survivor's rights.

CRS personnel must not promise a survivor a particular outcome or conduct an investigation beyond their authorized responsibilities.

10. CHILDREN AND OTHER VULNERABLE PERSONS

Children and other vulnerable persons may face increased risks of violence and exploitation.

CRS shall therefore:

- Promote child-safe and inclusive programme environments.
- Ensure children know how to raise concerns in ways appropriate to their age and understanding.
- Take allegations involving children seriously.
- Apply the CRS Child Safeguarding standards.
- Make appropriate referrals when protection concerns arise.
- Avoid exposing children or survivors to further harm through unnecessary disclosure of information, photographs, stories, or personal details.

11. SURVIVOR SUPPORT AND REFERRAL

CRS recognizes that survivors may require different forms of support.

Where appropriate and available, CRS shall facilitate referrals to qualified service providers for:

- Medical assistance.
- Psychosocial support.
- Legal assistance.
- Child protection services.
- Safety and protection services.
- Other specialized support according to the survivor's needs.

CRS shall respect the dignity, privacy, choices, and safety of survivors while fulfilling applicable safeguarding and legal responsibilities.

12. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Information concerning GBV reports shall be handled responsibly.

CRS personnel shall:

- Protect sensitive personal information.
- Avoid discussing cases unnecessarily.
- Share information only with authorized persons who have a legitimate need to know.
- Secure records relating to reported incidents.
- Avoid identifying survivors publicly without appropriate authorization and safeguarding consideration.
- Never use survivor information, photographs, or personal stories for publicity in a manner that could expose them to harm.

13. NON-RETALIATION

CRS prohibits retaliation against anyone who:

- Reports a GBV concern in good faith.
- Supports a survivor.
- Participates appropriately in a safeguarding process.
- Provides information about an alleged violation.
- Raises concerns about unsafe or inappropriate conduct.

Retaliation may itself constitute a violation of this policy and may result in disciplinary or other appropriate action.

14. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board of Directors

The Board provides governance oversight and promotes organizational accountability for GBV prevention and response.

Executive Director

The Executive Director provides leadership, ensures implementation of this policy, supports appropriate resources, and promotes a culture of safety and accountability.

Child Protection / Safeguarding Focal Person

The designated focal person supports awareness, receives or facilitates reporting, coordinates appropriate referrals, maintains confidentiality, and supports safeguarding processes within their authority.

All Staff and Volunteers

All CRS personnel are responsible for:

- Following this policy and the CRS Code of Conduct.
- Treating everyone with dignity and respect.
- Participating in required training.
- Reporting safeguarding and GBV concerns appropriately.
- Avoiding conduct that could place programme participants or colleagues at risk.

Partners and Contractors

Partners, contractors, and service providers working with CRS are expected to comply with applicable CRS safeguarding standards and to take appropriate measures to prevent GBV.

15. DISCIPLINARY AND LEGAL ACTION

A violation of this policy may result in appropriate action, including:

- Verbal or written disciplinary measures where appropriate.
- Suspension from duties or activities.
- Termination of employment, volunteer engagement, contract, or partnership.
- Removal from CRS activities.
- Referral to relevant authorities where appropriate or required.
- Other action permitted under applicable organizational policies and Malawian law.

CRS shall ensure that disciplinary processes are handled fairly and appropriately.

16. MONITORING AND REVIEW

CRS shall periodically review the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

Monitoring may include:

- Staff and volunteer training records.
- Review of reporting and complaints mechanisms.
- Safeguarding risk assessments.
- Programme monitoring.
- Community feedback.
- Lessons learned from safeguarding incidents.
- Periodic review of the policy and related procedures.

This policy shall be reviewed periodically and updated when necessary to reflect organizational learning, applicable law, and recognized safeguarding standards.

17. RELATED CRS POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

This policy should be read together with other relevant CRS governance and safeguarding documents, including:

- CRS Constitution and Bylaws.
- CRS Professional Code of Conduct.
- CRS Child Safeguarding standards or policy.
- CRS Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy.
- CRS Complaints and Feedback Mechanism.
- CRS Privacy Policy.
- Other applicable organizational policies and procedures.

18. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Children Relief Service (CRS) is committed to creating an environment where children, women, youth, staff, volunteers, and all community members are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.

GBV has no place within CRS programmes, operations, partnerships, or communities we serve.

Protecting people from violence is a shared responsibility. CRS is committed to prevention, safe reporting, appropriate response, accountability, and survivor-centered support.

Children Relief Service (CRS)

Protecting vulnerable children, empowering youth and girls, fighting hunger, strengthening food security, and building resilient refugee and host communities through sustainable, community-led development.

Policy Approval

Approved by: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Policy Review Date: _____