



Facilitating Participatory Development
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SAFEGAURDING POLICY

The development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC) adopts an equal opportunity approach in order to create an inclusive and diverse working environment for all. Our aim is to create an environment where disadvantaged demographics are consulted, empowered, and represented by mainstreaming their experiences into implementation, design and evaluation of sustainable policies, programs and projects.

The dRPC believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. dRPC will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by staff or associated personnel.

DUTY OF CARE

The dRPC is committed to recognizing, promoting and protecting the rights of all children and young adolescents. We believe that children and young adolescents are vulnerable and are at risk even in situations of care. The welfare of children is therefore a matter of highest priority in our organization and all staff, especially the education team is supported and held to a high standard to ensure that children are protected from harm, abuse and exploitation. We recognize that safeguarding considerations must be incorporated into all aspects of our work and as an organization, we strive to safeguarding on the front burner for all our activities and policies. Our mission and commitment in the child safeguarding and protection is guided by the Child Rights Act of Nigeria.

PURPOSE AND COVERAGE

This policy applies to all dRPC employees, contractors, trustees, consultants, fellows, advisors, interns and volunteers. This policy recognizes that our staff may have access to sensitive, confidential information about children in the course of implementing activities and the access to images when visiting project sites. The purpose of this policy is to therefore protect children, workers, staffers, at-risk adults and beneficiaries of assistance from any harm that may be caused due to their coming in contact with the dRPC. This includes harm arising from:

- The conduct of staff or personnel associated with the dRPC
- The design and implementation of dRPC's programmes and activities

The policy lays out the commitments made by dRPC and informs staff and associated personnel of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

This policy covers:

- Sexual harassment in the workplace
- Safeguarding staffers' and other personnel's rights to dignity and other associated rights as provided under the Nigerian labor rights and privileges
- Work environment conditions
- And, all rights and protection as provided by extant laws in Nigeria

OUR SAFEGUARDING COMMITMENTS

This policy will address the following areas of safeguarding [as appropriate]: child safeguarding, adult safeguarding, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

dRPC commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of awareness /prevention, reporting and response.

AWARENESS: At the dRPC, we commit to ensuring that our staff understand the nature, seriousness, interconnectivity and significance of safeguarding and child protection. We are also committed to research and sensitization on the risks to children their lives and the importance of prioritizing the well-being of children at all times. In light of this, we adhere to these being our responsibilities:

- Ensure all staff have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy.
- Design and undertake all its programmes and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with dRPC. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated.
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing, and deploying staff and associated personnel.
- Ensure staff receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organization.
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process
- dRPC staff and associated personnel must not sexually abuse or exploit at-risk adults' staff or subject an at-risk adult or staff to physical, emotional or psychological abuse or neglect

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

dRPC staff and associated personnel must not:

- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual activity. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance
- Engage in any sexual relationships with beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics

Additionally, dRPC staff and associated personnel are obliged to:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by an [NGO] staff member or associated personnel to the appropriate staff member

REPORTING: We commit to dRPC staff having clear guidelines on what to do when child protection concerns or disclosures arise. The dRPC's staff know the responsible Safeguarding and Protection Officer of the dRPC is Ms. Zubaida Onono and Head of HR, Ms. Hana Annette Hashim have their contacts at all times. All concerns or disclosures must be reported to these individuals immediately (within or after working hours).

We will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and the communities we work with. Any staff reporting concerns or complaints through formal whistleblowing channels (or if they request it) will be protected by dRPC's Disclosure of Malpractice in the Workplace (Whistleblowing) Policy. dRPC will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

Reporting a safeguarding concern

Staff members who have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to their Safeguarding Focal Point [as appropriate] or line manager. If the staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to their Safeguarding Focal Point or line manager (for example if they feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern) they may report to any other appropriate staff member. For example, this could be a senior manager or a member of the HR Team.

[Approach the Director, Human Resources or any Director to lay your complaints]

INVESTIGATION AND ACTION: The dRPC commits to taking all necessary actions within the Nigeria law and within prescribed punitive actions of the organization. If a concern or disclosure relates to a dRPC staff, the dRPC will constitute an Investigation Committee consisting of the Coordinator, the HR Director, Hana, the Cooperate Secretary, Umar, and an external protection expert from our partner Save the Children. Where an allegation is made about a staff member, the individual may be immediately suspended from their employment or contract without prejudice, whilst the investigation takes place. Where feasible, a decision as to whether the individual can return to work, be dismissed or further time to make a decision is required, will be made by the Executive within 28 days. In some cases, particularly where local authorities are involved, more time may be required before a decision can be made and decisions will be made in line with national laws. Should an allegation of abuse or other breach of this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy be substantiated, the individual will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the dRPC's Disciplinary Procedures which may include dismissal or termination of contract and reporting the concern/disclosure to relevant safeguarding authorities.

- dRPC will follow up on safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations (see Procedures for reporting and

response to safeguarding concerns in Associated Policies).

- dRPC will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of policy.
- dRPC will offer support to survivors of harm caused by staff or associated personnel, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.

Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need-to-know basis only and should be kept secure at all times.

Glossary of Terms

- **Beneficiary of Assistance**

Someone who directly receives services or works for dRPC's programmes. Note that misuse of power can also apply to the wider community that the NGO serves, and also can include exploitation by giving the perception of being in a position of power.

- **Child**

A person below the age of 18

- **Harm**

Psychological, physical and any other infringement of an individual's rights

- **Psychological harm**

Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation

- **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**

The term used by the humanitarian and development community to refer to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations by staff or associated personnel. The term derives from the United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

- **Safeguarding**

In Nigeria, safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect¹

In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our staff or programmes. One donor definition is as follows:

Safeguarding means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

This definition draws from our values and principles and shapes our culture. It pays specific attention to preventing and responding to harm from any potential, actual or attempted abuse of power, trust, or vulnerability, especially for sexual purposes.

Safeguarding applies consistently and without exception across our programmes, partners and staff. It requires proactively identifying, preventing and guarding against all risks of harm, exploitation and abuse and having mature, accountable and transparent systems for response, reporting and learning when risks materialize. Those systems must be survivor-centered and protect those accused until proven guilty.

Safeguarding puts beneficiaries and affected people at the center of all we do.

- **Sexual abuse**

The term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

- **Sexual exploitation**

The term 'sexual exploitation' means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.

- **Survivor**

The person who has been abused or exploited. The term 'survivor' is often used in preference to 'victim' as it implies strength, resilience, and the capacity to survive, however, it is the individual's choice of how they wish to identify themselves.

- **At risk adult**

Sometimes also referred to as a vulnerable adult. A person who is or may need care by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.