

Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy

Foundation Institute for Socio-Economic Balance

This Policy seeks to reduce risk to children and vulnerable adults in Foundation Institute for Socio-Economic Balance (IRSE) in all of IRSE work.

At IRSE, we believe that all children and vulnerable adults have a right to be protected and kept safe.

Children and vulnerable adults who come into contact with the IRSE and its partners must be safeguarded to the maximum possible extent from deliberate or inadvertent actions that place them at risk of being exposed to: any form of abuse; exploitation; humiliation; neglect and exclusion; discrimination.

This responsibility falls upon everyone who comes into contact with the IRSE and its programmes, and our staff, trustees and partners have specific roles in achieving this.

Definitions that apply to this policy:

Children are defined as being someone under the age of 18 years of age, which is consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Child abuse is when anyone under 18 years of age is being harmed or isn't being looked after properly. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional or neglect. The abuse and exploitation of children happens in all countries and societies across the world. Child abuse is never acceptable.

Vulnerable adults are those aged 18 years or more who either: identify themselves as unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation; or due to their gender, age or physical illness, mental health, learning or physical disabilities, as well as disasters and conflicts, and who are unable or unwilling as a result to identify themselves as vulnerable or subject to abuse, but are deemed at risk, because they are or may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

Abuse can come in many forms and includes:

Physical abuse – involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering, (e.g. hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.)

Sexual abuse – the use of a child or vulnerable adult for sexual purposes, this may include rape, sexual assault or sexual acts to which a vulnerable adult has not consented to or has been coerced into, the accessing or production of indecent images or using the internet, mobile technology or social

media to communicate inappropriately with a child or vulnerable adult. Engaging a child sexually regardless of consent or a mistaken belief as to their age.

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.

Psychological abuse - emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidating, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or support networks.

Financial or material abuse – theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure regarding wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions. Misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.

Neglect – ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services. Withholding of necessities of life: medication, adequate nutrition, clothing, and shelter.

Discriminatory abuse: ageism, racism, sexism, based on disability, sexual orientation, religion, or other forms of harassment, slurs, or hate-crime.

It is expected that all IRSE staff, trustees and those who work with IRSE, including contracted partners are committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults with whom they are in contact.

Roles and Responsibilities

Child and vulnerable adult protection and safeguarding is a corporate and an individual responsibility.

1. IRSE's Board is responsible for identifying the specific risks that occur within their own teams work and areas of responsibility and for taking advice from relevant experts, determining appropriate processes and procedures.

2. Everyone within the organisation is responsible for ensuring they and others within their care are aware of and follow the advice and guidance contained in the *Policy and Procedures* and that they identify and *deal* appropriately with safeguarding issues.

What we do:

IRSE is committed to safeguard children and vulnerable adults through the following means:

- **Awareness:** Ensuring that all staff and those who work with CDAC are aware of the problem of child and vulnerable persons abuse and the risks to children and adults.

- **Prevention:** Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and those who work with CDAC minimise the risks to children and vulnerable adults.

• **Reporting:** Ensuring that you are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children and vulnerable adults.

• **Responding:** Ensuring that action is taken to support and protect children and vulnerable adults where concerns arise regarding possible abuse. In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, this is what is expected of you:

If you are worried that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected, or you are concerned about the inappropriate behaviour of an employee, or someone working with IRSE, towards a child or vulnerable adult, then you are obliged to:

- act quickly and get help
- support and respect the child or adult
- where possible, ensure that the child or adult is safe
- contact your CDAC manager with your concerns immediately
- keep any information confidential to you and the manager.

Policy principles

IRSE staff and partners agree to abide by the following policy principles:

1. **Personal responsibility.** All staff, representatives and partners of IRSE must adhere to the highest standards of behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults both in their private and professional lives. They have a responsibility to understand, role model and promote this policy. They must do all that they can to prevent, report and respond appropriately to any concerns or potential breaches of the policy.

2. **Universality.** The Policy includes mandatory requirements that apply to everyone in all aspects of IRSE's work regardless of how and where they work.

3. **Standards based approach.** The IRSE has adopted a standards and values based approach to safeguarding, as described in this policy. Our safeguarding standards and standards of behaviour are often higher than those of the national laws and community custom or tradition. Nevertheless, it is our standards that representatives agree to when they partner with CDAC and it is to these to which they will be held account.

4. **Openness.** Partners commit to creating an environment in relation to safeguarding issues, where any issues or concerns can be raised and discussed.

5. **Transparency and accountability.** This is essential in order to ensure that poor practice can be addressed, potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged and best practice promoted.

6. **Accountability to the communities we work with.** Through strengthening our internal systems, standards and practice partners will be more accountable to the people we aim to serve.

7. **The Best Interests of any children or vulnerable adult involved.** When dealing with a Safeguarding concern, the best interest of the child or vulnerable adult will be our priority and we will strive to ensure their safety, health and well-being including meeting their emotional, psychological and physical needs.

8. **Confidentiality.** All Safeguarding concerns/reports/ investigations will be dealt with on a need to know basis and all records will be held securely. Likewise any communications will be kept confidential and secure.

9. **Timeliness.** Given the potential for increased or repeated abuse, timely responses are essential for reporting and responding to concerns.

10. **Uniformity.** This policy applies both during, after and in between work hours and to everyone involved in the work of the IRSE, regardless of their role or seniority.

The policy applies to all staff, trustees and partner organisations (contractors, grantees and other partners) of the IRSE, and their staff and volunteers fully or partially engaged on IRSE-funded projects.

Responsibilities of staff and representatives engaged on IRSE programmes

Staff must:

- Always report in situations where they see or suspect any form of abuse or inappropriate behaviour towards a child or vulnerable adult, An allegation of abuse is made to (or about) them, A person or child tells them about abuse Observe confidentiality at all stages, and record information in writing.
- Treat all children and vulnerable adults with respect
- Provide a good example of acceptable behaviour, in a way that is consistent with the IRSE's vision, mission and core values in and out of work hours.
- Be aware of any "power" (unequal) relationships that exist.
- Ensure that their actions cannot be misunderstood or cause offence and are acceptable within a relationship of trust.
- Be responsive to reports of abuse and investigate and report in accordance with this policy immediately.
- Remember that they are accountable to the vulnerable adult or child, their carers/parents (if any) and IRSE.

- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occurs during association with IRSE.

Staff must NEVER:

- use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual; intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services invite unaccompanied children into private residences, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case the supervisor's permission must be obtained, and ensuring that another adult is present if possible (noting that this does not apply to an individual's own children);
- use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media to exploit or harass children, or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- expose a child or vulnerable adult to inappropriate images, films and websites including pornography and extreme violence;
- use physical punishment on children;
- hire children for domestic or other labour: which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage; which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities; or which places them at significant risk of injury;
- permit abusive behaviour, e.g. bullying, ridiculing or taunting;
- have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others;
- encourage inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour such as infatuations or 'crushes' from, including sleeping in the same bed as, a child or vulnerable adult or doing things of a personal nature that a child or vulnerable adult could do for him or herself e.g. grooming, dressing or bathing;
- show favouritism to anyone or spend excessive amounts of time on one child or vulnerable adult;
- make suggestive remarks or actions, even in jest;
- engage in or allow sexually provocative games to take place;
- deliberately place yourself or others in a compromising situation.

Typically:

1. Whenever working with children or vulnerable adults, where possible be accompanied by another adult. Choose open, public locations for your activities
2. Avoid inappropriate use of the internet or email, such as visiting pornographic websites
3. Do not contact or accept 'friend' requests on social media from children or vulnerable adults and only interact with them through official IRSE social media accounts.

Staff must observe the following at all times:

Sexual behaviour

- Do not have sex with children.
- Do not engage in or allow sexually provocative games or banter with children or vulnerable adults.
- Do not touch a child or vulnerable adult in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Do not engage in transactional sex or prostitution in any form.

Physical behaviour

- Do not physically chastise vulnerable adults or children
- Do not engage in physical contact, such as hugging or holding hands, which maybe appropriate behaviour for a carer / parent of a child or vulnerable adult, but is not appropriate for a CDAC representative.

Psychosocial behaviour

- Be aware of the power relationship between an adult and vulnerable person and children, and between NGO workers and beneficiaries or users, and do not take any advantage of
- Use language that mentally and emotionally empowers children and vulnerable adults. Do not embarrass, humiliate or degrade children and vulnerable adults.
- Show neutrality and impartiality according to race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, beliefs, sexuality or political persuasion.

Following an investigation if it has found that any form of abuse or harm has been committed in relation to children or vulnerable adults, which are either criminal, grossly infringe the child's or vulnerable adult's rights, or contravene the principles and standards of this policy, IRSE will take immediate disciplinary action and any other action appropriate to the circumstances of the act or offence.