

POLICY **Safeguarding- Adults at Risk**

POLICY: Safeguarding of Adults At-Risk
APPROVED BY: Co-Directors
POLICY OWNER: Operations
CATEGORY: Safeguarding

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1. Introduction

World Renew staff members are expected to uphold their commitment to professional ethics and Christian values in all their relationships and assigned responsibilities. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to participate in Christ's ministry of good news, healing and hope, peace and justice. We are called to bear witness to Christ's healing love in the face of violence, including sexual, exploitation abuse and harassment. World Renew expects its staff to treat all people with respect, love, and honor in recognition of the dignity that comes from being created in the image of the Triune God.

World Renew is committed to promoting the security, dignity, and wellbeing of participants, partners, volunteers, and staff. We are committed to the safety, security, and dignity of adults who are vulnerable and/or at risk.

Adults who are vulnerable and/or at risk are defined¹ in this policy as being any person aged 18 or over who, additionally, either:

- a) has particular care, support or special needs, or other visible or invisible disabilities and who may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm, exploitation or harassment and as a result abuse can occur when they are mistreated, neglected or harmed by another person who holds a position of trust; or
- b) where the adult is dependent/reliant on others for the provision of basic services because of their context (e.g. in a refugee camp or as a recipient of relief supplies or in an unfamiliar country/location) and are potentially vulnerable to exploitation or abuse as a result of their status or lack of power/control or where country laws and authorities are weak in protecting against and responding to abuse; or

¹ Adapted from the definition of adults who are vulnerable and/or at risk used by Tearfund and found on their website (https://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/reporting_concerns/)

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- c) The adult is in a relationship (social or work), or in contact with, another adult who seeks to misuse their position of authority or trust to control, coerce, manipulate or dominate them.

This policy complements, but does not replace, the World Renew Code of Conduct, and Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. It also complements World Renew's Code of Good Practice and the principles of the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster relief.

This policy is also aligned with internationally recognized safeguarding and protection standards, including the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS), the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) principles on Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH).

2. Scope

This policy² is intended to apply to any work implemented or funded by World Renew, all World Renew staff and volunteers³, board members, interns, consultants, contractors, suppliers, visitors and World Renew partner staff.

3. Purpose

The policy applies to all people who work in and through World Renew and its partners as they have unique access to adults who are at risk/vulnerable. World Renew recognizes that all people, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, legal status, ability, physical or mental health or criminal background, have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse and is committed to safeguarding the welfare of at risk/vulnerable adults that we work with. This policy seeks to reduce risks to vulnerable adults who are participants in World Renew supported programmes and to ensure that acts of abuse are identified and dealt with if they occur.

² Some elements of this policy have been adapted from the Learn with Unite Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy found on their website (<https://learnwithunite.org/vle/file.php/1/policies/Safeguarding%20Policy.html>)

³ *World Renew Staff*: Refers to partners and partner staff, board members, board delegates, volunteers with Domestic Response Services (DRS), Refugee Resettlement Programme sponsors, interns, consultants, contractors, suppliers, donors and any external/internal visitor to World Renew offices or project sites internationally.

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4. Principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

- The welfare of at risk/vulnerable adults is of primary concern.
- All at risk/vulnerable adults, whatever their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, legal status, ability, physical or mental health or criminal background, have the right to safeguarding from abuse;
- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns about abuse to the designated Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point, and the responsibility of the relevant local or national agencies (e.g. police or social services department) to conduct, where appropriate, a joint investigation;
- World Renew will ensure that safeguarding reporting channels are accessible, safe, culturally appropriate, and inclusive for all individuals; taking into consideration barriers related to language, disability, literacy, gender, culture, and power dynamics including at risk/vulnerable adults and community members. Pathways will be established to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and safely
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, neglect, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Those people in positions of responsibility within the organization will work in accordance with the interests of at risk/vulnerable adults and promote the effective implementation of the policy outlined below.

The leadership of World Renew, including the Co-Directors, has the overall responsibility to ensure that safeguarding of adults at risk is embedded within the organization's governance, culture, policies, and operational practices.

5. Policy:

Safeguarding is a term used for the set of internal facing, operational policies, procedures and practice that we employ to ensure that our organisation itself is a safe organisation. Best practice is that safeguarding duties extend to whole organisation policies, values and ethos, and include all staff.

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World Renew is committed to preventing and responding to all forms of harm, including **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)**. PSEAH refers to the measures taken to protect at risk and vulnerable individuals and communities from sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment by staff, volunteers, partners, or anyone associated with the organisation.

World Renew Staff must ensure that their behaviour promotes a safe environment and allows at risk/ vulnerable adults to live free from:

- Harm and Abuse - including physical, sexual (exploitation, abuse or harassment) and emotional or mental (including the abuse of power/trust and any form of coercion)
- Neglect
- Discrimination
- Human Trafficking

5.1 Immediate Action to Ensure Safety

Immediate action may be necessary at any stage in involvement with at risk/vulnerable Adults. In all cases, it is vital to take appropriate action based on context to safeguard the adult or adults concerned.

All responses to safeguarding concerns will follow a survivor-centered approach that prioritizes the safety, dignity, privacy, and rights of the survivor. Survivors will be treated with respect and compassion, and their wishes and informed choices will be respected as far as possible. World Renew will seek to ensure that survivors are informed about and supported to access appropriate services, including medical, psychosocial, legal, and protection services through established referral pathways where available.

5.2 Recognition of Abuse or Neglect

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of an adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect an adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. An adult at risk may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by adults.

An at risk/ vulnerable adult can be put at risk of harm through a variety of actions, inadequate policies, procedures and failures to act. Abuse can take the form of:

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i) *Physical Abuse*

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a Vulnerable Adult.

ii) *Psychological Abuse*

Included in this are emotional abuse, threats, deprivation of contact, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal of services.

iii) *Sexual Abuse*

Sexual abuse is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, particularly under coercive conditions, and includes any sexual activity with children (individuals under the age of 1). (United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin 2003/13, 9 October 2003; Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse).

iv) *Sexual exploitation*

This is defined as 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 (United Nations Secretary General Bulletin, 9 October 2003). In these situations, the potential victim believes she/he has no other choice than to comply; this is not consent, and it is exploitation.

v) *Sexual Harassment*

Sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, or other verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual **nature** that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Sexual harassment may occur between colleagues, between staff and participants, or between any individuals associated with World Renew. It can include behaviors such as inappropriate comments, emojis, jokes, gestures, unwanted touching, persistent requests for dates, sharing sexually explicit materials, or any conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or inappropriate.

Sexual harassment can occur in person, in writing, or through digital communication, and may involve an abuse of power, authority, or professional position.

vi) *Financial and Material Abuse*

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This covers exploitation and pressure in connection to will's, property, inheritance, financial transactions or withholding material goods.

vii) Neglect or acts of omissions

Included in this are ignoring medical or physical care needs, withholding of medication or adequate nutrition and failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services.

viii) Discriminatory Abuse

Discrimination can be in the form of racist, sexist, ableist, ageist, classist, or other forms of harassment.

World Renew Staff need to be alert to the potential abuse of at risk/vulnerable Adults in any situation, including abuse by World Renew staff.

World Renew staff should know how to recognize and act upon indicators of abuse or potential abuse involving at risk/vulnerable Adults and where there are concerns about an at risk/vulnerable Adult's welfare. There is an expected responsibility for all staff to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a Vulnerable Adult in accordance with these procedures.

ix) Power and Abuse of Power

World Renew recognizes that staff, volunteers, and partners hold positions of trust that create inherent power imbalances in their interactions with vulnerable adults. If not managed well, these imbalances can place individuals at greater risk of harm.

Abuse of power occurs when someone uses their role, authority, or influence to exploit, manipulate, coerce, or take advantage of a vulnerable adult whether sexually, emotionally, financially, spiritually, or through intimidation.

All personnel are expected to be aware of these power dynamics, maintain professional boundaries, and never use their position for personal gain or pressure or control of others. Ensuring that power is used responsibly is essential to creating safe and respectful environments for all vulnerable adults we serve.

x) Consent and Capacity

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World Renew recognizes that at risk/vulnerable adults must be able to give informed, voluntary consent, free from pressure, fear, or manipulation. Consent is only valid when a person understands the information, can weigh the implications, and can communicate with a free choice. Capacity may be limited by disability, illness, trauma, cognitive impairment, intoxication, emotional distress, or mental disability. Consent is invalid when a person lacks understanding, is misled, coerced, afraid, influenced by power imbalances, or unable to process information. When capacity is uncertain, staff must seek guidance and act in the individual's best interests. Respecting consent and capacity is essential to safeguarding the dignity and wellbeing of vulnerable adults.

5.3 Responding to incidents of Abuse

What to do if at risk/vulnerable Adults Talk to you About Abuse or Neglect

It is recognized that an adult at risk may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect or talk spontaneously as an individual or in groups when you are present⁴. In these situations, you should:

- Listen carefully to the Adult at Risk
- Allow the Adult at Risk to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a Vulnerable Adult who is freely recalling significant events, unless they become extremely upset and agitated, in which case offer them a break and let them continue later.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the Vulnerable Adult's presentation as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.
- Use the Vulnerable Adult's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared - do not offer false confidentiality.
- Reassure the Vulnerable Adult that:
 - they have done the right thing in telling you;
 - they have not done anything wrong;
 - Tell the Vulnerable Adult what you are going to do next and explain that you will need to get help to keep him/her safe.

⁴ In the context of some specific programmes implemented by World Renew, such as Trauma Healing Programmes, there may be alternative procedures established for handling reports of abuse or neglect that is not related to the behaviour of World Renew Staff or volunteers. In such cases, these should be followed.

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- Do not insist the Vulnerable Adult repeats his or her account of events to anyone, unless as part of an investigation.

5.4 Reporting Concerns

If you have an at risk/vulnerable Adult safeguarding concern you should:

i) Report your Concern⁵

Because of your observations of, or information received, you may become concerned about a Vulnerable Adult who has not spoken to you. It is good practice to ask a Vulnerable Adult why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused or respond to a Vulnerable Adult wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action.

If you are concerned about a Vulnerable Adult, you must report your concerns⁶ to your nearest Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point. If you are unsure who this is, concerns can also be reported to the World Renew Complaints mechanism using the following contact details:

Email: complaints@worldrenew.net

World Renew safeguarding and complaints for focal points will know the correct procedures to follow and have relevant local contacts for referral if needed.

ii) Make a complaint

If you have information which suggests a World Renew staff or volunteer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a Vulnerable Adult
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a Vulnerable Adult
- behaved towards a Vulnerable Adult in a way that indicated s/he is unsuitable to work with Vulnerable Adults -

⁵ Please refer to the World Renew Complaints Policy and Guidelines for further details about the process of how a concern or a complaint is handled within World Renew.

⁶ In some cases, your concern may be related to a cultural practice that normalises abusive behaviours (for example chaining people with disabilities to their beds). These concerns should be reported and the Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point will then be in a position to either refer this information to a relevant organisation or use the information to inform World Renew Protection Programming.

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You should submit a complaint to the Word Renew Complaints Mechanism (complaints@worldrenew.net), following the World Renew Complaints Policy procedures, as the staff member is in breach of the World Renew Code of Conduct and the World Renew Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.

The World Renew Director of Safeguarding and Accountability will then follow the procedures outlined in the World Renew Complaints Policy and Guidelines and investigate if necessary. If a staff member or other person associated with World Renew is alleged to have abused or exploited a vulnerable adult, they will be suspended from their post or assigned modified duties until the investigation is concluded. If a staff member or other person associated with World Renew is found to have abused or exploited a vulnerable adult, they will be dismissed from their post.

5.4 Confidentiality

World Renew staff will ensure that any records made in relation to a reported concern, complaint or referral should be kept confidentially and in a secure place.

Information in relation to Vulnerable Adult protection concerns should be shared on a "need to know" basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to Vulnerable Adult protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a Vulnerable Adult's need for protection.

5.6 Working with partners

Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding policy requirements are included in partnership agreements or contracts with World Renew partners, contractors, vendors, and consultants.

World Renew is committed to ensuring that all partners uphold the same safeguarding standards in their operations and programs. As part of this commitment and written into Memorandums of Understanding these include, but are not limited to

- Partners are required to comply with World Renew's Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults Policy, Code of Conduct, and relevant safeguarding procedures, or demonstrate that they have equivalent safeguarding policies and systems in place.
- Safeguarding expectations will be integrated into programme design and implementation, including risk assessments, mitigation measures, and safe programming approaches that reduce the risk of harm, exploitation, or abuse of vulnerable adults.

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- Partners are required to establish accessible and safe reporting mechanisms so that vulnerable adults, community members, and staff can safely report safeguarding concerns.
- Partners must promptly report any safeguarding concerns or allegations involving World Renew-supported activities in accordance with World Renew reporting procedures and cooperate fully in any safeguarding assessments or investigations.
- World Renew will support partners to strengthen their safeguarding capacity through guidance, training, and collaboration to ensure effective safeguarding practices within programmes and partner organizations.

6. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years and revised to incorporate any lessons learned during the implementation of the policy.

Key Terms and Definitions

Abuse: Where the term “abuse” is used in this policy, it should be understood to include sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Complaint: A complaint is a specific grievance of anyone who has been negatively affected by the work of World Renew or their partner, or who considers that World Renew has not fulfilled a stated commitment or is in breach of a World Renew Policy. This includes staff behavior in relation to the World Renew Codes of Conduct. World Renew will handle complaints in a fair, appropriate, and prompt manner. A complaint requires a response.

Concern: A “concern” is when there is an issue related to the safeguarding of a vulnerable adult which is not because of the behavior of World Renew staff or partner staff behavior and therefore does not result in a ‘complaint’ against that staff. Instead, a concern must be reported so that appropriate referral or action can be taken in the best interests of the vulnerable adult.

Contact with vulnerable adults: Any interaction with or proximity to adults who are vulnerable/at risk. This includes both intentional and incidental contact.

Safeguarding: safeguarding is the set of internal facing, operational policies, procedures

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and practice that we employ to ensure that World Renew is a safe organization. This means we ensure that:

1. Anyone who represents our organization behaves appropriately towards vulnerable adults and never abuses the position of trust that comes with being a World Renew staff or volunteer.
2. Everyone associated with the organization is aware of and responds appropriately to issues of abuse or exploitation (sexual or otherwise) of vulnerable adults.

Partner: an organization that World Renew enters into Partnership agreements with to collaborate on mutually agreed action.

Vulnerable Adults: any person aged 18 or over who, additionally, either:

- a) has particular care, support or special needs and as a result abuse can occur when they are mistreated, neglected or harmed by another person who holds a position of trust or
- b) the adult is dependent/reliant on others for the provision of basic services because of their context (e.g. in a refugee camp or as a recipient of relief supplies or in an unfamiliar country/location) and are potentially vulnerable to exploitation or abuse because of their status or lack of power/control or
- c) The adult is in a relationship (social or work), or in contact with, another adult who seeks to misuse their position of authority or trust to control, coerce, manipulate or dominate them.