



# **CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION POLICY**

This Policy was adopted by Inclusive Rwanda in December 2025 and takes effect immediately.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Inclusive Rwanda is committed to ensuring the highest standards of child safety, protection, and welfare. This policy outlines how the organization safeguards all children—especially children and youth with disabilities—participating in our programs, activities, and services across Rwanda.

This policy applies to all staff, board members, project team members, interns, volunteers, partners, visitors, and contractors. It provides mandatory standards of behavior, responsibilities, and procedures for preventing and responding to abuse.

Inclusive Rwanda embraces a child-centered, disability-inclusive, and community-driven approach that respects dignity, participation, and protection of every child. This is relevant to our mission to empower children and youth with disabilities to become agents of change, and to support their total wellbeing across communities in Rwanda.

The policy includes guidelines for appropriate conduct, mandatory training programs, established procedures for reporting concerns or incidents of abuse, and requirements for background checks. It also involves regular monitoring and reviews to ensure the policy remains effective and relevant. By adhering to this policy, Inclusive Rwanda demonstrates its commitment to safeguarding children and upholding the highest standards of child protection.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY**

This organization follows strict procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all children involved in our activities. No child participates in any program without prior written consent from their parent or guardian. Our consent forms clearly outline the nature of the activities, possible risks, and the safety measures in place, and must be signed before participation.

Parents and guardians retain full responsibility for their children’s welfare throughout all project activities. We maintain open communication with them, keeping them updated on project plans, observations, and any concerns that may arise. Before any activity takes place, risk assessments are carried out, and appropriate safety measures—including supervision by trained staff—are implemented.

In emergencies, we rely on updated contact details for parents and guardians and ensure that any incident is reported immediately. We also seek regular feedback from parents and guardians to ensure our activities align with their expectations and contribute positively to their children’s development.

All consent forms, observations, and communication records are kept confidential and used only for safeguarding and program management. This ensures that all interactions with children respect their safety and acknowledge the vital role of their families. The purpose of this Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy is to:

### **2.1 Protect Children**

The main goal of this policy is to safeguard and protect all children receiving services from the organization by putting strong measures in place to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It

ensures that every activity and interaction takes place in a safe and secure environment, guided by established procedures that protect children from harm and provide immediate support whenever concerns arise.

## **2.2 Guide Staff and Volunteers**

This policy offers clear guidance for staff, volunteers, and anyone who interacts with beneficiaries. It sets out the expected standards of behavior, identifies actions that are not acceptable, and explains how to report any concerns or suspected cases of abuse. To ensure full understanding and compliance, all individuals receive thorough training and orientation on these safeguarding requirements.

## **2.3 Strengthen Communication**

The policy promotes clear and open communication among parents, guardians, children, staff, and volunteers. It establishes transparent ways to share information and feedback, allowing everyone to participate actively in safeguarding efforts. This approach builds trust and cooperation, ensuring that any concerns are handled quickly and appropriately.

## **2.4 Support child development**

This policy aims to promote the holistic development of children by ensuring their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive well-being. It creates a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where all children especially children with disabilities can learn, express themselves, participate meaningfully in programs, and grow with confidence and dignity, free from fear, discrimination, or harm.

## **2.5 Prevent abuse and neglect**

The policy establishes preventive measures to reduce the risk of abuse, exploitation, and neglect. These include staff and volunteer background checks, mandatory safeguarding training, clear codes of conduct, safe recruitment practices, and regular risk assessments in all activities, settings, and partnerships involving children.

## **2.6 Ensure legal compliance**

The policy ensures that the organization's safeguarding practices comply with national laws and regulations, including Rwanda's child protection framework, as well as relevant international and regional conventions on children's rights. This alignment strengthens accountability and ensures children's rights are respected and upheld at all times.

## **2.7 Promote a safe organizational culture**

The policy embeds safeguarding as a shared responsibility across the organization. Safeguarding principles are integrated into daily operations, program design, decision-making, staff performance management, and partnerships, fostering a culture of respect, vigilance, and zero tolerance for any form of harm to children.

## **2.8 Provide clear response mechanisms**

The policy establishes clear, accessible, and confidential reporting and response procedures for safeguarding concerns. It ensures that all reported cases are handled promptly, sensitively, and in a child-centered manner, prioritizing the best interests of the child while coordinating with relevant authorities and support services when necessary.

## **2.9 Enable continuous improvement**

The policy promotes ongoing learning and improvement by regularly monitoring, reviewing, and strengthening safeguarding systems and practices. Feedback, lessons learned from reported cases, staff capacity-building, and periodic risk assessments are used to adapt and improve the organization's safeguarding approach over time.

# **3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

This policy aligns with national and international child protection laws, including:

The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2015) emphasizes protection of children.

Law N°32/2016 Governing Persons and Family includes parental responsibilities and child rights.

Law N°71/2018 Relating to the Protection of the Child the primary national child protection law.

Law N°68/2018 on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence.

National Child Development Agency (NCDA) directives and guidelines.

Law N°66/2018 Regulating Labour in Rwanda – child labor protection.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): 1989

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): 2006

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC): 1990

### **Inclusive Rwanda recognizes that:**

All children have equal rights to protection regardless of disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic background.

Children with disabilities may face additional risks and must receive enhanced protection.

Collaboration with parents, caregivers, community leaders, and local authorities is essential.

# **4. DEFINITIONS**

**Child:** The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years. The Rwandan Law *N° 71/2018 of 31/08/2018 Relating to the Protection of the Child* defines a child as any person under eighteen (18) years of age.

**Persons with Disabilities:** According to United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

**Safeguarding:** Actions taken to promote the welfare, safety, and dignity of children and prevent harm.

**Child Protection:** Measures taken to respond to concerns of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

**Abuse:** A violation of a child's rights through physical, emotional, sexual, or online harm.

**Disclosure:** When a child or person communicates an incident of abuse.

**Types of abuse include:**

**Physical abuse:** any intentional act that causes physical harm or injury to a child. It includes hitting, beating, burning, shaking, or any use of force that harms a child's body or health.

**Emotional abuse:** is behavior that harms a child's emotional well-being and self-esteem. It includes threats, humiliation, insults, isolation, discrimination, or actions that make a child feel unsafe, unwanted, or worthless.

**Sexual abuse** **Sexual abuse** is any sexual activity involving a child for the benefit of another person. It includes rape, sexual exploitation, inappropriate touching, exposing a child to sexual acts or materials, and involving a child in pornography.

**Neglect:** is the failure of a caregiver or responsible adult to meet a child's basic needs. This includes lack of food, shelter, care, supervision, education, or medical attention necessary for a child's healthy development.

## 5. WHO THE POLICY APPLIES TO

This policy applies to:

All Inclusive Rwanda staff

Volunteers and interns

Board members

Consultants

Partner organizations

Visitors and donors interacting with children

Contractors providing services involving children

Community facilitators and trainers

No one is exempt from complying with this policy.

## **6. CODE OF CONDUCT**

All persons associated with Inclusive Rwanda must:

### **6.1 Required conduct and interactions**

Treat children with dignity and respect at all times.

Use child-friendly, inclusive, and disability-sensitive communication.

Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries.

Avoid being alone with a child where possible.

Respect privacy and confidentiality.

Immediately report any suspicion of abuse.

Promote children's participation and self-advocacy.

Seek informed consent from caregivers before involving children in activities.

### **6.2 Unacceptable behavior**

Any form of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.

Hitting, insulting, intimidating, or threatening a child.

Engaging in sexual conversations or relationships with a child.

Discriminating based on disability, gender, language, or background.

Taking photos of children without consent.

Giving gifts or money to children without authorization.

Failing to report safeguarding concerns.

Using degrading language or harmful cultural practices.

Any breach may result in disciplinary action, dismissal, and legal consequences.

## **7. REPORTING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS**

All staff and associates must report concerns immediately to the Child Safeguarding Focal Person.

## **7.1 Channels for Reporting**

Safeguarding focal person(email/phone)

Executive Director

Board

## **7.2 Referral**

Inclusive Rwanda is committed to protecting children but does not manage severe child abuse cases. When a case, involves immediate danger, or requires medical care, psychological support, or legal action, it must be referred to specialized government institutions such as National Child Development Agency NCDA, Isange One Stop Center, Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), and/or the Police. Referral ensures the child receives professional care, protection, and justice in line with national laws and the best interests of the child.

### **NCDA District Officer (National Child Development Agency)**

Assesses and refers cases of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and other child protection concerns.

Links children and families to social services, follow-up support, and community resources.

### **Isange One Stop Center (Multi-Sectoral Support)**

Multi-disciplinary centres providing holistic services to survivors of child abuse and Gender Based Violence GBV, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, evidence collection, and safe referral pathways. It operates at district level.

### **Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB)**

National investigative agency responsible for investigating criminal cases, including serious child abuse and exploitation.

Works with police and prosecution authorities to handle complex/criminal child protection cases and evidence collection.

### **Rwanda National Police**

Responds to criminal aspects of child protection cases.

Operates the Child Help Line and coordinates investigation and referral to services.

## **7.3 What to Report**

Any suspicion of abuse

Disclosure by a child

Observed indicators of harm

Unsafe behavior by staff or community members

#### **7.4 Cases for referral**

When medical, psychosocial and legal services are required immediately: severe abuse like rape, defilement, trafficking, severe physical abuse or other criminal issues involving a child.

#### **7.5 How to Report**

Listen without judgment

Do not promise secrecy

Record facts only

Submit an incident form within 24 hours to designated person.

Inclusive Rwanda protects whistleblowers from retaliation.

### **8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **8.1 Child safeguarding focal person**

Lead policy implementation

Receive and respond to complaints

Train staff and volunteers

Maintain confidential safeguarding records

Liaise with authorities

#### **8.2 All staff and volunteers**

Follow the policy and Code of Conduct

Attend mandatory safeguarding trainings

Report concerns immediately

#### **8.3 Management**

Ensure resources for safeguarding

Conduct regular safeguarding risk assessment

### **9. CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES**

Inclusive Rwanda commits to:

Creating a safe physical and social environment

Conducting risk assessments for all activities  
Ensuring parental/guardian consent  
Ensuring disability inclusion (sign language interpreters, accessible venues, etc.)  
Conducting background checks for staff  
Using child-friendly communication and materials  
Ensuring safe transport arrangements when required.

## **10. RESPONSE TO ABUSE**

### **10.1 Steps in Responding to Abuse**

Identify signs or disclosure.  
Report immediately to the Safeguarding focal person.  
Record all facts using the incident report form.

Investigation

Refer to National Child Development Agency (NCDA), Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) or Rwanda National Police where required.

A clear decision is made

Report to donors (if required)

### **10.2 Disclosure Guidelines**

When a child discloses:

Stay calm and listen.

Allow the child to speak freely.

Ask only open, non-leading questions.

Thank the child for speaking up.

Report immediately.

## **11. DISSEMINATION**

This policy must be shared with:

All staff and volunteers

Partner organizations

Community facilitators

It must be displayed visibly in offices and used during training and orientation.

## **12. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed:

Bi-annually

After any safeguarding incident

When national laws change

Continuous feedback from staff, children, and caregivers will inform improvements.

### 13. COMMITMENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have read, understood, and agree to comply with Inclusive Rwanda's Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 14. INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Confidential

Date of Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter Details:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Child Details:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Disability (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Incident Details:

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Actions Taken: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Reporter: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_