

## **SURF RWANDA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Goal**

The overall goal of this policy is:

**To protect children from abuse of all kinds in the delivery of SURF's work in Rwanda.**

The policy outlines practical steps to increase SURF's capacity to manage and reduce risks of child abuse associated with its activities. While it is not possible to eliminate risk entirely, much can be done to reduce opportunities for child abuse.

### **Guiding principles**

The child protection policy is guided by these principles:

**> Zero tolerance of child abuse:** Child abuse is not tolerated by SURF, nor is possession of or access to child pornography. SURF trains its staff on their obligations.

SURF will not knowingly engage, directly or indirectly, anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children, nor fund any individual or organisation that does not meet SURF's child protection compliance standards in their operations and activities.

**> Recognition of children's interests:** The UK and Rwanda are both signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and SURF is committed to upholding the rights and obligations of the convention. SURF recognises that the children with which it works, young survivors of the genocide, are particularly vulnerable.

**> Sharing responsibility for child protection:** To effectively manage risks to children, SURF requires the active support and cooperation of contractors and its partners in delivering SURF-funded aid activities. Contractors and NGOs must meet the terms of the child protection policy and will be held accountable for complying with it. SURF also encourages awareness of child protection issues amongst its local partners.

**> Risk management approach:** While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of child abuse, careful management can reduce the incidence of child abuse associated with aid activities.

## **SURF's child protection compliance standards**

Partners must have their own child protection policy with these elements as a minimum:

- a. child-safe recruitment and screening processes, targeted interview questions and verbal referee checks, for all personnel (including volunteers) who will be working with children
- b. a documented child protection complaints management procedure
- c. provision of child protection training
- d. a child protection code of conduct
- e. a commitment that the organisation will not permit personnel to work with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or wellbeing
- f. a provision in all employment contracts that the organisation has the right to dismiss or transfer to other duties personnel who breach the child protection code of conduct
- g. a documented policy compliance regime, including specified sanctions for breaches

## **Review and revision of the policy**

The policy will be reviewed each year by the Board of Trustees at a Board. Any changes to the policy can be proposed before that time, and if required will be agreed and adopted at the next scheduled Board Meeting.

**Last reviewed: March 2025**

## **Child protection code of conduct**

I, *[insert name]*, engaged by *[organisation]*, agree that while implementing SURF-funded activities, I will:

- treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status
- not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate
- not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts, where under the law(s) applicable to the child is below the age of consent or the act(s) are an offence under relevant laws
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children
- not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible
- use any computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium
- refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children (excluding my own children)
- refrain from hiring 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
- comply with all relevant Rwandan legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour
- immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures.