

## Policy Information

Approved by: (sign/date)	<b>Approved – Pending Signature</b> (Board of Trustees)	<b>Policy Number:</b>	2025-1201-04
		<b>Risk Appetite:</b>	Low
		<b>Policy Family:</b>	Human Resources and Organizational Development (HROD)
Policy Owner: (sign/date)	(Head of HROD)	<b>Version:</b>	1.0
		<b>Effective Date:</b>	December 1, 2025
		<b>Next Review Date:</b>	December 1, 2027

### 1. PURPOSE

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) recognizes its duty of care toward protecting children and vulnerable persons engaged in its programs and activities and commits to creating and maintaining positive environments that protect them from exploitation and abuse. The IRRI Safeguarding Policy and its operational Procedures are intended to establish standards, practices, and responsibilities to protect children and vulnerable adults from exploitation and abuse.

### 2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all IRRI Staff, Officers, Board of Trustees, and Associated Parties (e.g., contractors, consultants, suppliers, hosted/seconded staff, trainees, volunteers, interns, scholars, students, visiting scientists, and other visitors working on IRRI’s behalf).

All are expected to always comply during or outside working hours, regardless of location. Conduct outside the workplace that conflicts with IRRI’s values may still affect the Institute’s reputation and is subject to review.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

- **Abuse:** is the physical, sexual, neglect, or emotional mistreatment of a child/vulnerable person resulting in actual or potential harm to their health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.
- **Child:** is defined in accordance with the internationally ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child <sup>1</sup> as any person below the age of 18, regardless of the legal majority or age of consent locally.
- **Harassment:** consists of unwelcome comments or behaviors that are offensive, demeaning, intimidating, or physically harmful.

<sup>1</sup> [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

- **Human trafficking:** is a crime against humanity that involves an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through force, coercion, or other means (e.g. fraud), for the purpose of exploiting them.
- **Sexual exploitation:** the misuse of a position of power to pressure or demand others to provide sexual favors.
- **Safeguarding:** is the preventative, responsive and referral measures undertaken to protect children and vulnerable persons, ensuring that no such individual is subject to any form of harm because of their engagement with IRRI or because of the actions of one of its Associated Parties. This includes ensuring that where there are concerns over the welfare of a child or vulnerable person or where one has been subject to harm, appropriate and timely actions are taken.
- **Vulnerable person:** an individual who needs special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. POLICY STATEMENT

A child is defined as someone under 18 years of age, and a vulnerable person is defined as someone who needs special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect (see [Definitions](#)).

IRRI Staff and Associated Parties must:

1. Work proactively to protect children and other vulnerable persons from all forms of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, discrimination, and exploitation including human trafficking.
2. Refrain from engaging in any prohibited activities related to exploitation, including all forms of human trafficking, sexual activity, receipt or possession of any image of child pornography, and the abuse of children and vulnerable persons.
3. Refrain from humiliating, degrading, or exhibiting any form of aggressive or exploitative behavior towards children or vulnerable people.

Engaging in any such activity involving children or vulnerable persons is strictly prohibited under the IRRI Safeguarding Policy. Violations by staff or associated parties will result in disciplinary action.

#### 5. POLICY DETAILS

##### 5.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

IRRI's safeguarding approach is grounded in seven core principles:

1. **Zero Tolerance** - IRRI does not tolerate exploitation or abuse of children or vulnerable persons

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<sup>2</sup> [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK)

and will not engage with individuals or entities posing such risks.

2. **Protection for** - All children and vulnerable persons regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity, or background deserve protection. Extra care is given to those most at risk.
3. **Shared Responsibility** - Safeguarding is a collective duty of all IRRI Staff and Associated Parties.
4. **Risk Management** - While not all risks can be eliminated, they must be identified and minimized through thorough assessments (see Risk Management and Research Ethics Policies).
5. **Rights-Based Approach** - IRRI upholds the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [UN National Frameworks for the Protection of the Rights of Disabled Persons](#) relevant frameworks protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.
6. **Mandatory Reporting** - All concerns or suspicions of abuse must be reported by IRRI Staff and Associated Parties.
7. **Confidentiality** - Information related to safeguarding concerns is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.

## 5.2 BEHAVIOR PROTOCOLS

IRRI prohibits the hiring of children to execute IRRI projects and programs and expects Staff and Associated Parties to abide by the following behavioral protocols:

1. Maintain an appropriate relationship with all children/vulnerable persons and families with whom we partner and work. Sexual contact with children/vulnerable persons is explicitly prohibited.
2. Not be in a compromising or vulnerable position. Staff and Associated Parties should know that even if a child/vulnerable person behaves inappropriately, they, as professionals, are always the party responsible.
3. Always be visible when working in proximity to children/vulnerable persons and, wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present.
4. Exercise sensitivity to local customs relative to appropriate conversation and physical contact with children/vulnerable persons. Never touch children/vulnerable persons inappropriately or in a culturally insensitive manner.
5. Observe all guidelines in section [5.2](#) concerning the appropriate use of child images (photography and video) and personal information.
6. Immediately report any suspicions or knowledge of policy violations or inappropriate behavior towards children/vulnerable persons to the direct supervisor/main point of contact in IRRI or Human Resources and Organizational Development (HROD) contact person.

Failure to report or the concealment of a known incident involving a child/vulnerable person will constitute gross misconduct, resulting in [disciplinary action](#).

## 6. PREVENTION

### 6.1 RESEARCH PROGRAM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Risks to children and vulnerable persons must be assessed during program planning and implementation, in line with IRRI's Research Ethics Policy and Risk Management Policy. Project Leaders or Country

Representatives/Managers, in coordination with the IRRI Institutional Review Board (IRB), will:

1. Conduct risk assessments for all activities involving children or vulnerable persons.
2. Identify and classify high-risk activities.
3. Document mitigation measures (e.g., ensuring two adults are present when engaging with children).
4. Review and update assessments throughout the activity lifecycle.

## **6.2 APPROPRIATE USE OF IMAGES AND PERSONAL OR SENSITIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION**

IRRI's overriding principle is maintaining respect and dignity in portraying children, families, and communities. Pictures, images, or other likenesses of children and/or information about children must not compromise their care and protection. Also see [IRRI's Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Persons Procedures](#) for further information.

## **6.3 RECRUITMENT, SELF-DECLARATION, DISCLOSURE, AND BACKGROUND CHECKING**

IRRI will not knowingly employ or engage any individual whether staff, consultant, intern, or volunteer who has been convicted of child abuse, abuse of a vulnerable person, or related offenses.

To uphold this commitment, IRRI will:

1. Include safeguarding principles in all job postings.
2. Where legally permitted and available, conduct criminal background checks for roles involving contact with children or vulnerable persons.
3. Verify previous employment history.
4. Require candidates to declare any relevant convictions during the interview process.
5. Require all new IRRI Staff and Associated Parties to sign the [Acknowledgment of the IRRI Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#).
6. Ensure all existing staff sign the acknowledgment within three months of this policy's release.

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **7.1 IRRI STAFF AND ASSOCIATED PARTIES**

IRRI Staff and Associated Parties are individually responsible for:

1. Familiarizing themselves and adhering to the IRRI Safeguarding Policy and its associated Procedures. In addition,
2. Complying with the Safeguarding reporting procedures, including but not limited to immediately reporting any suspected policy violations in accordance with the outlined reporting process.

### **7.2 IRRI HUMAN RESOURCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (HROD)**

IRRI HROD is responsible for creating this policy and awareness throughout all IRRI offices. It is the responsibility of IRRI HROD to:

1. Provide technical input/advice on the reporting and allegation management process per the guidelines outlined in the Safeguarding Reporting Procedures.
2. Document policy violations and preserve institutional memory in all cases.

3. Assure that the [Acknowledgment of the IRRI Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#) is signed by all IRRI Staff and Associated Parties, consultants, interns, and volunteers.

### 7.3 COUNTRY OFFICES

Country or Regional Representatives or equivalent staff roles play a key role in ensuring compliance with the IRRI Safeguarding Policy. They are responsible for:

1. Ensuring all IRRI Staff and Associated Parties read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and submit a signed [Acknowledgment of the IRRI Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#).
2. Supporting HROD in sensitizing country office staff to the policy and promoting awareness.
3. Reporting or facilitating the reporting of any policy violations to the Head of HROD and/or Director General.

### 7.4 TRAINING

HROD, in collaboration with Line managers, is responsible for ensuring the following:

1. All Staff and Associated Parties receive instructions on the IRRI Safeguarding Policy and Procedures during induction.
2. All Staff and Associated Parties acknowledge the information received and understand the policy by reading and returning a signed copy of the IRRI Safeguarding Code of Conduct to HROD.
3. A signed copy of the IRRI Safeguarding Code of Conduct is kept on file.

## 8. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Please see the IRRI Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Persons Procedure document for further information on reporting requirements, associated forms, and process guidelines.

## 9. REFERENCES AND ASSOCIATED POLICIES

Please see IRRI's main intranet webpage on [Policies, Supplements, Procedures, and Guidelines](#) for more information or [IRRI's website](#) for openly accessible documents. Also see the CGIAR Integrated Partnership: [Protection Against Sexual Misconduct, Exploitation, Abuse, and Human Trafficking](#).

## 10. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Effective date	Approved by	Summary of changes
1.0		Board of Trustees	New policy