
Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

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Section 1: Safeguarding Policy

Objective and Policy Statement

The Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK) is committed to championing the rights and livelihoods of indigenous people and other communities living in the world's rainforests. Protection of their safety and freedoms is an essential component of the organisation's DNA.

The RFUK Safeguarding Policy lays out RFUK's commitments to keeping the people and communities that we work with safe from harm that may be caused by coming into contact with RFUK. This includes potential harm arising from:

- The conduct of staff or personnel associated with RFUK
- The design and implementation of RFUK's programmes

RFUK has a **zero-tolerance approach** to any attitudes or behaviours that put children or adults at risk of harm. Safeguarding incidents are acts of gross misconduct and are grounds for disciplinary action up to and including, dismissal and referral to relevant authorities for criminal prosecution.

Safeguarding Definition

The specific areas of harm covered by the RFUK Safeguarding Policy are:

Sexual Exploitation

Defined as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes. It includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Under UN regulations, it includes transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationships.

RFUK considers any form of payment (financial or otherwise) in exchange for sexual services (including the services of sex workers) to be a form of sexual exploitation and a violation of this policy. This is regardless of whether or not prostitution or payment for sex is legal in the context where the transaction occurred. Any staff member, partner, or supplier who, while engaged in RFUK activities, pays an individual for sex or sexual activities will be subject to RFUK's investigative and disciplinary procedures.

Sexual Abuse

This is defined as the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. It covers sexual assault (attempted rape, kissing/touching, forcing someone to perform oral sex or touching) as well as rape. Under UN regulations, all sexual activity with a child (under the age of 18 years) is considered to be sexual abuse.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any form of unwelcome sexual attention that might offend, humiliate or intimidate the other person and may be experienced by anyone of any gender. It includes uninvited touching or physical contact; leering at a person or at parts of their body; talking about a person's own sex life or asking about another person's sex life; sexual jokes or propositions and sexually offensive communications (phone, email, SMS or other social media).

Sexual harassment does not have to be repeated or continuous to be prohibited. The person being harassed does not need to say that the behaviour is unwelcome to the offending party.

Scope of Policy

The standards and content of the RFUK Safeguarding Policy, and the [RFUK Code of Conduct](#), apply to anyone directly associated with, or carrying out work on behalf of, RFUK. This includes:

- Staff members or interns contracted by RFUK.
- Anyone engaged with work or visits related to RFUK, including but not limited to consultants, volunteers, contractors, agency workers, board members, journalists and celebrities.
- Programme partners or organisations subcontracted by programme partners to conduct work with or on behalf of RFUK.
- Any other organisations carrying out work on behalf of RFUK.

This policy is intended to protect and support any survivors of safeguarding incidents where the perpetrator is associated with RFUK. Survivors do not need to have any connection to RFUK and can be general members of the public.

Of particular concern are the following at risk groups:

Children

RFUK defines a child as any person under the age of 18 in line with the definition in the United Nations Covenant on the Rights of the Child.

At risk adults

Any person who is, or may be, in need of care by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

At risk adults can also be members of marginalised groups, including but not limited to, ethnic minorities, people of scheduled tribes or castes, women and girls, LGBTQI+ groups, refugees or internally displaced populations who are at increased risk of exploitation within the countries where they reside.

Anyone who can be exploited through an imbalance of power

Particularly anyone who directly receives or hopes to receive funding or services from RFUK or its partners.

Limitations of the Policy

Safeguarding concerns in the wider community, not perpetrated by persons associated with RFUK, are out of scope of this Policy. RFUK will still signpost any survivors who are not covered by the policy to other organisations and support services that can assist them.

Other incidents of wrongdoing not covered by the RFUK Safeguarding Policy can be reported through the RFUK Complaints Policy or Whistleblowing Policy. See Annex I for a list of related policies.

Section 2: Prevention

Roles and Responsibilities

Upholding the Safeguarding Policy in its entirety is a non-negotiable obligation for all RFUK staff, and those carrying out work on behalf of RFUK. In addition, certain individuals (or groups of individuals) have *specific* obligations over-and beyond adhering to the policy's content, which are detailed below.

Safeguarding Incident Monitoring Group

The RFUK Safeguarding Incident Monitoring group is comprised of a maximum of four team members including the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) and the Safeguarding Lead on the RFUK Board of Trustees. All members of the group must have received specialised training in Safeguarding.

The Incident Monitoring Group is responsible for monitoring the safeguarding@rainforestuk.org inbox. In the event of a safeguarding incident, the incident-monitoring group will, where possible, meet within 48 hours of receiving the incident report to decide on next steps.

Designated Safeguarding Officer(s)

It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) to:

- Support the activities related to the down streaming of safeguarding (including child protection) practices to RFUK partners.
- Monitor the safeguarding inbox and ensure that any safeguarding (including child protection) concerns are responded to and managed in line with the requirements of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Where appropriate, act as Safeguarding Investigations Manager during investigations, unless there is a conflict of interest.
- Ensure that incidents are reported to the Board, donors and regulatory bodies.
- Provide general safeguarding updates to the Safeguarding Lead in advance of all Board meetings

Safeguarding Lead on the Board

The Board of Trustees have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that RFUK upholds its safeguarding (including child protection) commitments, and that the Safeguarding Policy and related documents are effectively enforced. As such, Safeguarding will be a standing item in the agenda of every Board meeting and the board will review RFUK's Safeguarding Policy and procedures on a periodic basis.

The Safeguarding Lead on the RFUK Board holds the RFUK staff team to account, ensuring that appropriate systems of accountability are in place. The Safeguarding Lead has access to the safeguarding@rainforestuk.org inbox and provides oversight to ensure that reported incidents are responded to and managed in an appropriate, timely, effective and survivor-centred manner.

In the event of a safeguarding incident occurring, the Safeguarding Lead must ensure that RFUK conducts appropriate organisational change following the conclusion of the investigation to mitigate the risks of similar incidents reoccurring.

Safeguarding Focal Points

Safeguarding focal points are individuals throughout RFUK who have received training on how to receive a safeguarding incident or concern from a survivor or concerned person. When made aware of a safeguarding concern, a Safeguarding Focal Point is responsible for completing a Safeguarding Incident Report form and submitting the completed [form](#).

In the event of an investigation, Safeguarding Focal Points may be required to support with the investigation or survivor support processes.

Senior Management Team

- Ensure that the Safeguarding Policy and related documentation and processes are maintained in line with donor and regulatory body requirements and international best practice.
- Ensure down streaming of safeguarding practices to RFUK partners.

Operations Team

The operations team is responsible for:

- Disseminating this policy to new staff and ensuring they receive instructions on its content as part of their induction process;
- Delivering annual refresher training to all RFUK staff, including to the Safeguarding Focal Points on how to receive a safeguarding incident;
- Maintaining training records for new and existing staff;
- Supporting the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) in managing complaints and/or concerns that are raised with the organisation;
- Supporting the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) in the event of any investigation that results from concerns/complaints that are submitted.

Programmes Team

The Programmes team is responsible for ensuring that:

- Safeguarding features in project design and delivery;
- Risks in relation to safeguarding are continuously assessed and proactively responded to;
- This policy is implemented and enforced in all RFUK overseas activities;
- Programme Partners have in place their own Safeguarding Policy and processes aligned with RFUK's
- Supporting partners to increase their safeguarding capacity where necessary;
- All donor requirements regarding safeguarding are tracked and met, with the support of the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s).

All Team Members

Creating a culture of awareness and accountability is a vital component of effectively minimising the risk of safeguarding incidents occurring, as well as appropriately managing safeguarding incidents when they arise.

- All team members must understand the concept of safeguarding, the resources available for identifying and reporting it, and other essential components of preventing and responding effectively to safeguarding incidents.
- All team members must understand RFUK's zero tolerance approach to safeguarding incidents and the severe consequences resulting from involvement in a safeguarding incident.
- All team members are obligated to report any potential incident or concern that they witness, are made aware of, or suspect within 24 hours. Intentionally not reporting a safeguarding incident is considered an act of gross misconduct and will result in disciplinary procedures.

Safe Recruitment

Checks

A key focus of RFUK's Safeguarding Policy is ensuring safe recruitment practises that help to avoid hiring any persons that may present a safeguarding risk. To this end, RFUK takes a risk-based approach when recruiting staff, interns and contractors/consultants, carefully considering the risks associated with the role. This will include securing two references from previous employers and/or academic supervisors, and a criminal background check for any role that has direct contact with at risk groups including children, vulnerable adults or anyone that can be exploited through an imbalance of power with RFUK. For residents of countries where criminal background checks are unavailable or have limited value, RFUK will instead request three references.

Job Adverts and Interviews

RFUK's zero-tolerance approach to safeguarding incidents is included in all job adverts. A question about safeguarding should be included during the interview process for any role that has direct or indirect contact with at risk groups.

Code of Conduct

All staff and affiliates, including consultants, contractors and interns must read and sign the RFUK Code of Conduct prior to starting work with RFUK (and then at yearly intervals thereafter). The Code of Conduct lays out the behaviours expected of all persons associated with RFUK.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action, up to, and including, dismissal or termination of contract, and referral to relevant authorities for criminal prosecution.

Contracts

RFUK's zero tolerance approach to safeguarding incidents is included in all contracts for staff, affiliates, consultants and contractors. Our safeguarding expectations are also included in all contracts with programme partners and other stakeholders.

Training

During the on boarding process, all staff and affiliates will undertake online safeguarding training. Anyone with a safeguarding role must in addition attend more extensive in-person safeguarding training. Annual refresher training will be provided to all team members.

Other Organisational Processes

Risk Assessments

RFUK takes a risk-based approach to all of its activities in relation to safeguarding. Risk assessments are essential for adequately assessing the risk of harm occurring through RFUK's people and activities. RFUK utilises risk assessments to assess role and activity risks, overall organisational risks and project and investigation risks for safeguarding.

Communications

How people are portrayed in communications materials, including image gathering and use, can cause harm or offence if they propagate negative stereotypes or depict people in any way other than with authenticity, dignity and respect. RFUK maintains safeguarding at the heart of its use of images (please see the [Asset Gathering Guide](#) for more information).

Partner Organisations

Due Diligence

Programme Partners are required to adhere to a safeguarding policy and reporting framework approved by RFUK. These policies should comply with any relevant legal/regulatory frameworks, international standards, and grant requirements and they must be properly implemented and monitored.

This will be checked during the Due Diligence process prior to signing a contract with a potential programme partner. Where a programme partner does not already have safeguarding policies and processes in place, RFUK will support them in achieving these over a specified timeline as a condition of contract.

Partner Contracts

A safeguarding clause is included in all contracts and partnership agreements with Programme Partners. The text of this policy is provided as an annex to all RFUK partners and consultancy contracts.

Reporting Lines

If a safeguarding incident occurs at a partner organisation or is reported to a programme partner concerning another organisation or person affiliated with RFUK, this must be reported within 24 hours to RFUK by submitting details of the concern to safeguarding@rainforestuk.org, or by filling in the details on this [form](#). A member of the RFUK Safeguarding Incident Monitoring Team will respond wherever possible within 48 hours of receiving the report.

Investigations

Programme partners are responsible for investigating safeguarding incidents occurring within their organisations except where there is a conflict of interest, or concern that the incident will not be adequately investigated. In these instances, RFUK will advise on the best course of action to take on a case-by-case basis.

Section 3: Safeguarding Incidents

Raising a Concern

There are several ways to report a safeguarding concern to RFUK:

- By email to safeguarding@rainforestuk.org
- By completing the safeguarding form on the RFUK [website](#).
- By contacting the Rainforest Foundation UK on +44 207 485 0193 and selecting the designated option from the menu.
- By speaking in person to a safeguarding focal point or Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- By posting a concern to the RFUK office, at the following address:
FAO – Safeguarding Officer
The Rainforest Foundation UK
Suite 201, Pill Box Studios,
115 Coventry Road,
London E2 6GG
United Kingdom

When reporting a concern, the following information should be detailed where possible:

- Name of person making report;
- Name(s) of alleged survivor(s) of safeguarding incident(s) if different from above;
- Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s);
- Description of incident(s);
- Date(s), time(s) and location(s) of incident(s).

Although RFUK will review anonymised safeguarding incidents, this can make it very difficult for RFUK to proceed with an investigation.

Receiving a Report

Survivors of exploitation, abuse or harassment often do not report incidents through established reporting mechanisms. Reports may be received through various channels:

- Formal written reports submitted through RFUK grievance mechanisms;
- Informal reports via text, social media, etc.;
- Community-based complaints mechanisms;
- Disclosures made directly to staff members;
- Concerns or reports about others raised to staff members;
- Rumours or gossip.

Safeguarding reports are most frequently made in person to junior staff members, as they are considered most approachable. It is therefore essential that all RFUK team members be trained in how to receive and submit a safeguarding incident report.

The following dos and don'ts must always be followed when receiving a report:

Do	Don't
Listen	Become defensive
Empathise with the person	Argue with the person
Ask who, when, where, what but not why	Be dismissive
Repeat/check your understanding of the situation	Blame others
Ask the person's permission to pass on the information to the Safeguarding Incident Monitoring Group	Make assumptions without knowing the facts
Tell the person what will happen next in the reporting process	Make promises you can't keep
	Ignore the problem
	Try to investigate yourself
	Tell colleagues outside of the Safeguarding Incident Monitoring Group

Reporting Process

Any staff member informed of a safeguarding concern is responsible for completing a safeguarding incident [report](#) detailing the safeguarding concern, either directly using the form on the website or by email to the safeguarding@rainforestuk.org inbox. This will then be reviewed by the Safeguarding Incident Monitoring team.

If there are any concerns that a member of the Incident Monitoring Group is implicated in the incident, or may not act objectively, then it is advised to report a safeguarding incident directly to another person within RFUK with a safeguarding role, or to a member of the senior management team.

The Safeguarding Incident Monitoring team will meet, where possible, within 48 hours of receiving a safeguarding incident to evaluate the information and open an investigation if it is considered that a safeguarding incident may have occurred.

If the reporting staff member is not satisfied that the organisation is appropriately addressing the report, they have a right to escalate the report either up the management line, to the Board of Trustees, or to an external statutory body. The staff member will be protected under the RFUK Whistleblowing Policy against any negative repercussions as a result of their report, as long as the report was made in good faith.

Obligation to Report

Staff

All RFUK staff, volunteers and affiliates are obligated to report any potential safeguarding incident that they witness, are made aware of, or suspect within 24 hours. Failure to do so will be considered gross misconduct and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

As long as the person raising a concern does so in good faith, you only need to genuinely believe that there is an issue before making a disclosure. If under investigation the disclosure is found to be unsubstantiated, the person who raised the concern will still be protected under the RFUK Whistleblowing Policy.

If the person making the disclosure does so in bad faith, with malicious or vexatious reasons, then they will not be protected under the Whistleblowing Policy and their complaint may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal without notice.

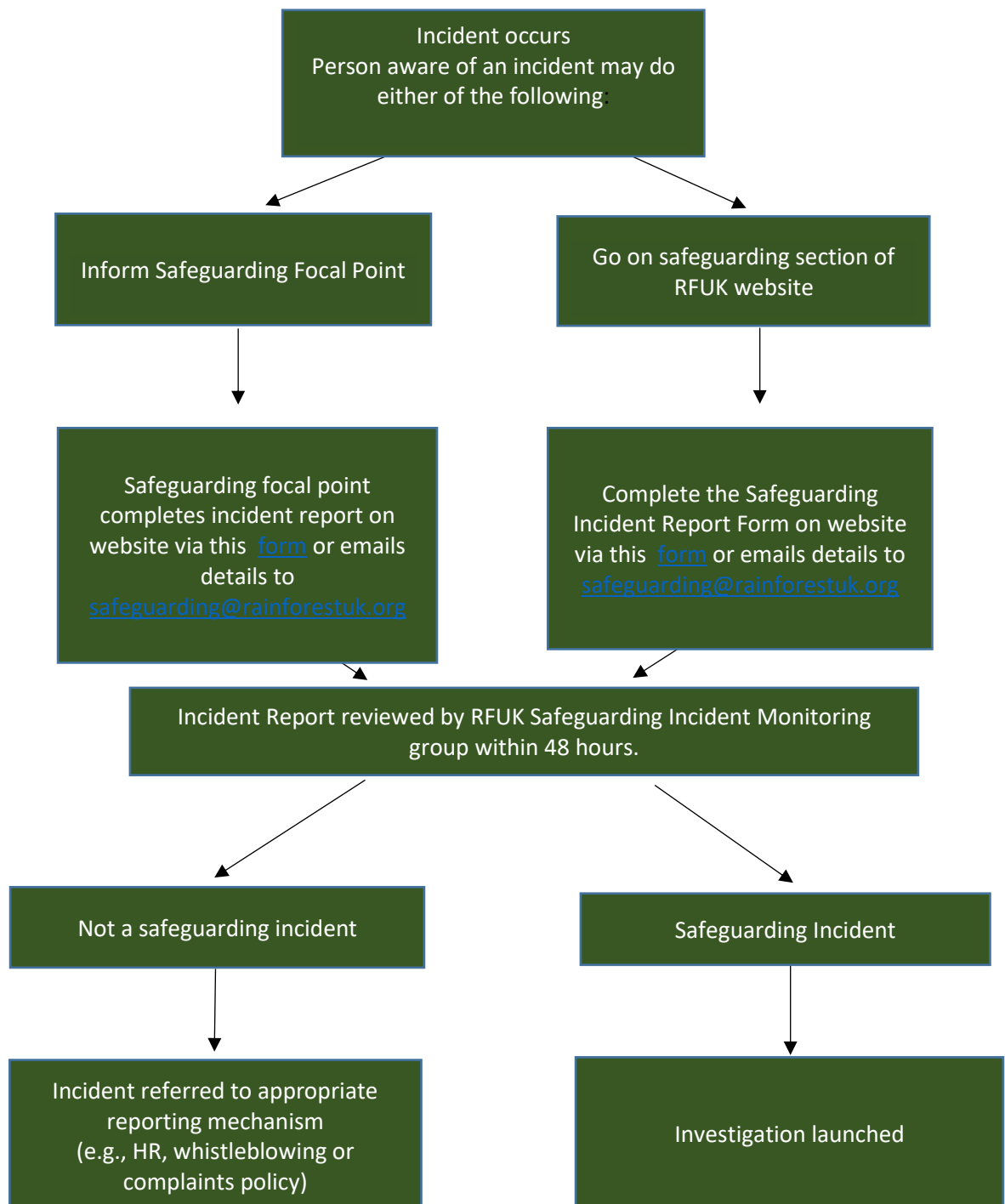
Programme Partners

Programme partners are also obligated to report safeguarding incidents relating to RFUK staff or associated personnel within 72 hours. Safeguarding incidents occurring at a partner organisation not related to RFUK staff or associated personnel should also be reported within a reasonable timeframe. Non-reporting will be considered a breach of contract and may lead to the termination of the working relationship.

Members of the public/other stakeholders

RFUK encourages all stakeholders aware of a safeguarding concern to report it, including external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

Reporting Process Flow Chart



Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Confidentiality means that information relating to the concern and subsequent case management will only be shared with those that need to know about it. This is distinct from secrecy where information is not shared at all. RFUK cannot agree to secrecy when receiving reports as this would hinder the appropriate investigation and response required.

To ensure confidentiality, persons that submit a safeguarding concern will only be told a minimum of information following the submission of an incident report. It is essential that they do not inform others of their suspicions or try to investigate further themselves. This can hinder an investigation and cause distress and harm to survivors or persons unfairly accused.

Investigations

Launching an investigation

Once a safeguarding incident has been confirmed, the Safeguarding Incident Monitoring group will decide whether the incident can be investigated internally, or whether an external investigator is required. This will depend on the severity or scale of the incident.

All incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse containing violent or physical conduct, incidents involving children or involving senior management, including Board members, should be investigated by a team of two external, expert investigators ideally with a gender balance.

Once an investigation is opened, a Safeguarding Investigations Manager will be appointed from within the RFUK team. The role of the Safeguarding Investigations Manager is to oversee the investigation, including providing quality checks on the work of the investigation team. The Investigations Manager ensures that the investigators have everything they need in order to conduct their investigation. This can include arranging interviews, supervising timelines, travel and payments.

Investigation Purpose

The purpose of an investigation is to:

- Determine if a staff member or other person associated with RFUK has breached RFUK's policies;
- Protect individuals from being abused or exploited;
- Highlight any organisational failings;
- Identify aspects of programme delivery or performance that increase risks of abuse or exploitation by staff;
- Make recommendations for appropriate response and organisational change where appropriate.

At all times the safety of everyone – the survivor, the subject of complaint and anyone else involved in the case – must be the top priority.

Risk management

Risk assessments are essential when conducting an investigation in order to, as accurately as possible, assess the risk of harm to all parties involved, including through revenge actions, or gender-biased local laws. Risk assessments should be conducted prior to commencing interviews, and updated throughout the investigation process.

If there is a serious concern reported, with potential for on-going risk during the investigation, the subject of complaint should be removed from the situation while the investigation is pending. This can be achieved through suspension or by providing exceptional paid leave to the subject of complaint.

Investigation Process

The following table provides a basic outline of the investigation process.



Survivor Centred Approach

The RFUK Safeguarding Policy seeks to empower survivors by exploring the options available to them, without imposing ideas or opinions on the most appropriate course of action.

It is important not to force a course of action on a survivor. Some people may wish to report an incident to the police, others may not want to. It is important to respect their decisions.

In some countries, reporting safeguarding incidents to police or other authorities may cause serious repercussions for the survivor, including imprisonment and risk to life. It is essential that a thorough risk assessment is conducted to ascertain the true risks of conducting a safeguarding investigation or reporting an incident to the authorities for all parties involved.

Reporting safeguarding incidents may pose administrative, financial, logistical and emotional challenges to survivors. RFUK owes a duty of care to survivors that includes helping them to access services, which can include:

- Medical support;
- Psycho-social support;
- Transportation to appointments;
- Compassionate leave;
- Accompaniment to police meetings and payment of a police report;
- Translation services;
- Childcare during appointments occurring as a consequence of a safeguarding incident;
- Signposting to other services as required.

Survivor support guidelines should be created in each country where a safeguarding incident related to RFUK could occur, in order to facilitate signposting to local support mechanisms. Survivor support should be made available to survivors where appropriate both during and after the investigation.

Section 4: Concluding a Safeguarding Investigation

Deciding on outcomes

The anonymised findings from the investigators will be submitted in a report to a Decision-Making Group – usually comprised of three staff members including the Head of Operations and the Executive Director (NB no members of the investigation team can form part of the Decision-Making group). It is the responsibility of the Decision-Making Group to review the report and the findings of the investigation team and decide on the outcomes of the investigation, including enacting disciplinary procedures and referral to relevant authorities where appropriate. RFUK aims to make a decision within one month of a report being made, although depending on the circumstances this timeframe may increase.

Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process. Those involved in the safeguarding incident will be informed of the outcome of the investigation but will not be kept up to date during the course of the investigation.

Reporting to Donors and Regulatory Bodies

Many institutional donors and private funders have additional safeguarding reporting requirements. It is the responsibility of RFUK to ensure that safeguarding reporting requirements are met for all grants and contracts awarded to RFUK in the event of a safeguarding incident.

Any serious incidents must be reported to the [Charity Commission](#). RFUK will include a high-level report on safeguarding incidents received and investigated within their annual report.

Learning

After an incident it is essential to undergo learning and improvement processes in order to avoid similar incidents occurring in the future, including through enhancements to this policy.

Appendices

Appendix I: Associated Policies

- RFUK Code of Conduct
- RFUK Data Protection Policy
- RFUK Data Retention Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Procedures for safeguarding in staff recruitment
- Other policies as appropriate.

Appendix II: Definitions and terminology

Several terms are used in this policy to describe/categorise individuals or organisations. They are defined as follows, and their meaning should be applied consistently throughout this document:

- **Beneficiary of assistance, and or member of the public:** Any individual or group of individuals who receive or benefit from (directly or otherwise) the activities and services managed by RFUK, or who comes into contact (directly or indirectly) with RFUK staff, personnel associated or activities.
- **Partner:** Any institution or entity that enters into a formal cooperation arrangement with RFUK, and is provided with financial, advisory, material and/or capacity building support (for example through a grant) to conduct pre-agreed activities with, or on behalf of, RFUK.
- **Personnel Associated/Representatives:** A broad definition incorporating any individuals who directly represent the RFUK, but is not employed by the organisation, including to but not limited to trustees, ambassadors and volunteers.
- **RFUK:** The Rainforest Foundation (UK); its staff and representatives, activities, programmes, publications, campaigns systems and or infrastructure.
- **Staff:** Any individual who is under a contract of employment with RFUK.
- **Supplier:** Any individual, group, firm or organisation contracted by RFUK to provide a service to RFUK including consultants.
- **Child:** A person below the age of 18.
- **Harm:** Psychological, physical and any other infringement of an individual's rights.
- **Psychological Harm:** Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.
- **Safeguarding:** In the UK, safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, well-being and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults from harm that arises from coming into contact with our staff or programmes. Safeguarding means taking all responsible steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

This definition draws from our values and principles and shapes our culture. It pays specific attention to preventing and responding to harm from any potential, actual, or attempted abuse of power, trust or vulnerability, especially for sexual purposes.

Safeguarding applies consistently and without exception across our programmes, partners and staff. It requires proactively identifying and preventing and guarding against all risks of harm, exploitation and abuse and having mature, accountable and transparent systems for responses, reporting and learning when risks materialise. Those systems must be survivor-centred and also protect those accused until proven guilty. Safeguarding puts beneficiaries and affected persons at the centre of all we do.

- **Sexual Abuse:** The term sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

- **Sexual Exploitation:** The term 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. This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.
- **Survivor:** The person who has been abused or exploited. The term 'survivor' is often used in preference to 'victim' as it implies strength, resilience and the capacity to survive. However, it is the individual's choice how they wish to identify.
- **At risk adult:** sometimes also referred to as vulnerable adult. A person who is or may be in need of care by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. In the context of RFUK's work, indigenous people are often at risk because of the discrimination they suffer and their more limited access to decision making, redress mechanisms and support in general terms. Some cultural practices (including forms of sexual slavery) may enhance the safeguarding risks these groups face, in particular indigenous and non-indigenous women.