
Child Protection Policy

Date: September 2023

Adopted by the Board: 26 September 2023

Review Date: September 2025



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Child Protection Policy Statement

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

RFUK's Child Protection Policy lays out RFUK's commitments to keeping the children 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.

While the rights, protections, procedures and responsibilities identified in the separate *Safeguarding Policy* apply to all people, through this policy, RFUK makes clear its explicit commitment to ensuring the rights, safety and well-being of *children* who come into contact with this organisation.

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.

Organisational Context

In many of the indigenous communities with which the RFUK and its partners work, children and young people are accorded a valued role in society. This role is in most cases not comparable with the role played by children in economically rich countries such as in the UK – often being more integrated into the community as a whole, with much closer bonds to the immediate and wider family. Being almost entirely subsistence communities, in many cases experiencing deep poverty, children and young people often play an active and sometimes critical economic role.

Some of the communities that RFUK works with are in themselves, as a whole, discriminated against by others, and the children within these communities can experience particular forms of abuse, such as denial of the right to education.

Within this context, RFUK recognises that children and young people need protection and safeguarding, including from the effects of poverty, disadvantage, exclusion and violence. In addition to these problems which may affect their communities as whole, individual children may also be at risk from specific forms of abuse by adults or other children.

There are additional child protection concerns in situations in which indigenous communities are the victims of ethnic and cultural discrimination. Where RFUK intervenes to strengthen the civil, legal and land tenure rights of indigenous communities, it will do so in such a way that recognises the potential challenges faced specifically by children.

RFUK in its mission and project work does not have a strategic or managerial responsibility for commissioning and delivering services for children and families nor works directly with children. In addition to this, some of the countries we operate in do not have any legislation in place relating to protection of children's wellbeing. Despite this, whenever RFUK staff and its partners may come in contact with children while carrying out project work, necessary procedures and guidelines are put in place in order to ensure these children would be protected.

Legal and contextual framework

RFUK recognises the international standards for child protection, such as the ***UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989***, and ***ILO Convention 182***¹ as well as other *International Standards for Child Protection*² which provide a benchmark for agencies and organisations working with children. Our approach to child protection follows the standards outlined in "***Setting the Standard: A Common Approach to Child Protection for International NGOs***"³ that is based on the UNCRC and has been endorsed by the UK's Secretary of State for International Development.

RFUK has adopted this policy statement and set out procedures to ensure these are relevant to their work and cultural context, whilst continuing to follow international standards. RFUK's independent partners are required to create, implement and monitor their own child protection policy, in line with these standards.

¹ International Labour Organisation, Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Adopted by the Conference at its Eighty-Seventh Session, Geneva, 17 June 1999 <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/com-chic.htm>

² Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland, Standards for Child Protection, http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/standards_for_child_protection_services.pdf

³ Tearfund and NSPCC, 2003, *Setting the Standard: A Common Approach to Child Protection for International NGOs* <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/content/library/documents/setting-standard-common-approach-child-protection-international-ngos>

Scope of Policy

The standards and content of the Safeguarding and of the Child Protection Policies, 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 children from 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.

Limitations of the Policy

Safeguarding and child protection 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.

Roles and responsibilities (adapted from RFUK's Safeguarding Policy)

Upholding the Child Protection 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 involving children, 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 and child protection practices to RFUK partners.
- Monitor the safeguarding inbox and ensure that any safeguarding and child protection concerns are responded to and managed in line with the requirements of the Safeguarding and the Child Protection Policies.
- 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 and child protection commitments, and that the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies and related documents are effectively enforced. As such, safeguarding (including child protection) will be a standing item in the agenda of every Board meeting and the board will review RFUK's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies 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 and Child Protection Policies 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 (including child protection) 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 and child protection 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 and Child Protection Policies and processes aligned with RFUK's
- Supporting partners to increase their safeguarding and child protection capacity where necessary;
- All donor requirements regarding safeguarding and child protection 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 and child protection, 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.

Prevention

Safe Recruitment

Checks

A key focus of RFUK's Child Protection 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 and child protection. 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 (including child protection).

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 and child protection 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 and child protection 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.

Procedures

Raising a Concern

There are several ways to report a safeguarding (including child protection) 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 and child protection incidents, this can make it very difficult for RFUK to proceed with an investigation.

Receiving a Report

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.

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 (including child protection) 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 (including child protection) 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 (including child protection) 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 (including child protection) concern to report it, including external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with a safeguarding and child protection 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 and child protection 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

All incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse involving children 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 children 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.

Risk management

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

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.

Appendix I – Contact Details for Relevant Organisations

Contacts for parents, carers, children / young people

- **ChildLine** Free helpline for children / young people to talk about any problem. 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
- **Parentline Plus** Free helpline offering support and information on parenting issues. 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- **Domestic Violence Helpline** For women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf. 24-hour Freephone Helpline 0808 2000 247 www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk
- **NSPCC Helpline** Advice and support to adults who are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child 24-hour Freephone Helpline. 0808 800 5000, <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

E-safety

- **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre** www.thinkuknow.co.uk/Parents
- **National Crime Agency CEOP Command** <http://www.ceop.police.uk>

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.
- **UK:** The United Kingdom, its territories and/or any other legal entities under its control or subject to its governance