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PRO AFRICA SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Preamble

A safeguarding policy outlines the measures taken to protect individuals, particularly children and vulnerable adults, from harm, abuse, and neglect. It involves creating a safe environment, preventing harm, and responding effectively to any concerns. This policy is crucial for ensuring the well-being and safety of those in care and promoting their healthy development.

1. Purpose

PAD affirms that all people are equal and deserve a decent life, it dismantles barriers of racial, economic and gender-based oppression so that all may participate in program design, decision-making and implementation This Safeguarding Policy focuses on commitment of PAD to protect all individuals who interact with PAD program including children, adolescents, vulnerable adults, marginalized groups, partners, stakeholders and colleagues from abuse, exploitation, neglect, and harm in the context of livelihoods projects. PAD also subscribes to the principles of the rule of law, gender equality, non-discrimination, equal opportunity, fair treatment, mutual respect and dignity in recruitment, selection, appointment, remuneration and advancement of her employees at all levels. PAD promotes a safe and inclusive environment across all operations and activities. PAD personnel are thus obligated to create and maintain an environment that protects children and program participants and prevents sexual exploitation and abuse. Any abuse or perceived abuse of power and authority by PAD personnel or partner personnel undermines the mission and integrity of PAD and will not be tolerated.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, volunteers, consultants, contractors, interns, and partners
- All project participants and community stakeholders
- All physical and virtual spaces where livelihoods-related activities occur

3. Safeguarding Principles

- **Do No Harm:** Foundational commitment to ethical, responsible, and empathetic programming. It means that our interventions no matter how well-intentioned must be designed and implemented to prevent any risk of physical, emotional, social, financial, or psychological harm to individuals and communities.
- **Zero Tolerance for Abuse:** This principle affirms PAD's unwavering commitment to creating and maintaining a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment. No act of abuse, exploitation, discrimination, or harassment whether physical, emotional, sexual, economic, or psychological is acceptable under any circumstances.
- **Sexual exploitation:** Sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse by PAD personnel constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence. Sexual activities in benefit of the program interventions are prohibited.
- **Sexual relationships** between PAD staff and program participants are prohibited since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of PAD's relief, development and peace building work.
- **Equality & Inclusion:** PAD is committed to fostering environments where every individual regardless of identity or background is protected from harm, empowered to participate, and treated with dignity and respect. Safeguarding

is not selective it is a universal obligation that must be upheld without bias or exclusion.

- **Community Engagement:** PAD is committed to ensuring that communities are not just beneficiaries, but active partners in designing, monitoring, and enforcing safeguarding measures. Engaging communities builds trust, promotes accountability, and ensures safeguarding practices are culturally sensitive, locally relevant, and genuinely protective.

4. Risks in Livelihoods Projects

Livelihoods programs may involve:

Livelihoods projects, while designed to empower communities economically, can unintentionally expose participants especially vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities to safeguarding risks. These include power imbalances between staff and beneficiaries, financial exploitation during asset distribution, unsafe work environments during job placements or training, and increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation, coercion, or harassment. Without clear safeguards, some individuals may feel pressured to offer favours or comply with unethical demands to access resources. Additionally, community tensions may arise if selection criteria are poorly communicated, leading to exclusion or conflict. Projects must anticipate and address these risks proactively through inclusive design, transparent operations, and continuous monitoring.

5. Safeguarding Measures

Prevention

- **Safeguarding Policy & Code of Conduct:** Clearly outlined behaviours, expectations, and zero tolerance for abuse.
- **Risk Assessments:** Identify potential safeguarding risks linked to activities like asset distribution, training sessions, or work placements.
- **Gender-Sensitive Programming:** Design inclusive programs that consider risks faced by women, youth, and persons with disabilities.
- **Safe Recruitment:** Recruitment team will ensure that recruitment and screening procedures are put in place in an effort to prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse from being hired or rehired in

roles that work with or interact with children and/or project participants including all positions in PAD.

- **Safeguarding Induction:** Provide orientation for staff, including ethical behaviour, safeguarding protocols, and survivor-first principles.
- **Community Awareness:** Educate beneficiaries about their rights, expected staff conduct, and how to raise concerns.

Response

- **Reporting Channels:** Set up accessible, confidential, and culturally appropriate mechanisms (hotlines, boxes, focal points).
- **Designated Focal Points:** Trained staff responsible for receiving and managing safeguarding complaints.
- **Investigation Procedures:** Clear steps to assess, document, and address concerns while ensuring survivor safety.
- **Support Services:** Referral pathways to counselling, legal aid, shelter, and medical care for survivors.
- **Protection from Retaliation:** Whistle blower protection and survivor anonymity are prioritized.

Training & Accountability

- **Regular Training:** Ongoing sessions for staff and partners on safeguarding principles, recognizing abuse, and responding to disclosures.
- **Scenario-Based Workshops:** Use realistic case studies to strengthen response capacity. Regular safeguarding training sessions
- Signed agreements for staff and partners to uphold policy

6. Reporting & Confidentiality

All safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately to the **Safeguarding Focal Point**, whose contact will be displayed at all program sites. Confidentiality will be maintained to protect the identity and safety of survivors and reporters.

7. Legal and Policy Alignment

This policy aligns with:

- Zimbabwe's Children's Act, Domestic Violence Act, and Sexual Offences Act
- International safeguarding standards (UN CRC, IASC Guidelines)

8. Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated based on feedback, incident reports, and changing program needs.

Definition of terms

- **Child abuse:** any improper action or failure to act by a person in a position of trust which results in physical, emotional or sexual harm to a minor. Specific types of child abuse include
- **Physical abuse:** any intentional physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury.
- **Emotional abuse:** a pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's emotional development, sense of self-worth, dignity and identity.
- Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. Any sexual contact with a child is prohibited.
- **Neglect:** failure to provide a child's needs or to protect from harm or potential harm
- **Exploitation:** exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, certain types of child labour.