



GIRLS EDUCATION RESPONSE INITIATIVE

CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

POLICY INCORPERATED: 10/MAY 2024

SECTION 1

POLICY STATEMENT

GERI Code of Conduct contains essential principle and rules that reflect the behaviours and standards Girls Education Response Initiative (GERI) expects from its employees, trustees, volunteers, interns, trainees, contractors, consultants, partners, and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity. These behaviours underpin our mission to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and achieve immediate and lasting changes in their lives.

This Code of Conduct outlines the high standards of integrity and professionalism that we expect.

Employees and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity frequently work in situations where they are in positions of power and where they are granted high levels of trust (in relation to the people we are trying to reach, vulnerable adults, vulnerable communities, other organisations and one another). This power and trust must never be abused and everyone in the organisation has an obligation and responsibility to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards in their day-to-day conduct.

The Code of Conduct applies 24 hours a day, 5 days a week and 360 days a year. It sets out an ethical and behavioural framework, which is as relevant and applicable to our personal life as it is in our daily work. For this reason, all employees and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity, are required to sign a declaration (at the end of this document) confirming that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct and agree to comply with it at all times.

GERI will not tolerate any behaviour that conflicts with our core values and Code of Conduct. Any breach of the Code of Conduct will be taken extremely seriously and immediately action.

SECTION 2

PRINCIPLES AND EXPECTED STANDARDS

1. Overarching Principles

- All employees and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity must endorse the concept of human rights and children's rights and commit to respecting those rights in all their decisions and actions.
- Our ability to achieve our aims, often in complex and insecure environments, is linked to how we are seen and in particular, the level of trust placed on us. The trust awarded to us is heavily reliant on all staff and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity, upholding and promoting high standards of conduct and accepting the special responsibility for safeguarding human rights in general and children's rights in particular.
- GERI's work is based on deeply held values and principles; it is essential that our commitment to children's rights and humanitarian principles is supported and demonstrated by all employees and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity. **If any of us fails to act in a way that is not consistent with our values and principles we fail as an organisation.**
- The basic values of SCI require that we observe the laws, customs and traditions of the countries where we work or are visiting. In cases where such laws, customs or traditions contravene the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1945**, then the latter two shall prevail. They are founded on the conviction that all children and adults are of equal value, children have special rights and everyone has a responsibility to uphold those rights.
- All human and financial resources must be used in an appropriate and effective way for the means for which they are designated.
- All employees and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity are required to report any potential incident, abuse, or concern that he/she has or is made aware of through the proper reporting systems and/or to a senior manager within GERI.
- If you are a senior leader or manager, you have a particular responsibility to role model the expected standards, to create a working environment, which supports everyone upholding these standards, and to deal with breaches of the Code of Conduct extremely seriously.

2. Respect others

I will:

- Show due respect, particularly through my conduct, dress and language, for the religious beliefs, usages and customs, rules, practices and habits of the people of the country or context I am in and of my place of work.
 - Respect others in my private life and professional life during regular working and non-working hours.
3. Abstain from any conduct that I know or should know to be inappropriate, particularly with regard to the specific context I am in.

- Abstain from any conduct that could appear to be inappropriate, particularly with regard to the specific context I am in.
- Respect the basic rights of all human beings and marginalised groups regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, caste, language, HIV status and other aspects of identity.
- Act fairly, honestly and tactfully in order to treat people with dignity and respect.

I will not:

- Not take part in any form of discrimination, harassment, bullying, humiliating behaviour or abuse (physical, sexual, emotional and verbal), intimidation or exploitation, or in any other way infringe the rights of others.

Working actively to safeguard children and adults including marginalised groups, and the people we serve

I will:

- Create a safe environment for children and anyone we seek to help (including vulnerable adults) to prevent them from all forms of abuse and harm, including physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect.
- Challenge any attitude or behaviour of an employee or other representative working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity and members of the communities where we work, which contravenes GERI's Code of Conduct.
- Treat all the people we serve, whether they are children or adults, with respect and dignity.
- Respect the right to personal privacy of all the people we serve.
- Plan activities involving children and/or vulnerable adults to ensure there are two or more adults present at all times. At a minimum, another adult should be within sight or hearing of activities.
- Ensure there are separate sleeping areas for all GERI representatives and anyone we are trying to help through our programme activities.
- Inform my colleagues about where I am and what I am doing when I am working with children and all people we serve.
- Treat all children and anyone we are trying to help with the same respect and provide support and aid according to their needs. I will not show favouritism, which includes giving personal gifts to the people we serve.
- Be aware of how my conduct and behaviour may be interpreted by children, the people we serve and people from different social/economic and cultural backgrounds and contexts.
- Provide space and opportunity for children, vulnerable adults and anyone we are trying to help to talk about and raise their concerns.
- Comply with all of GERI's relevant policies and procedures as detailed in section 4.
- Attend all mandatory GERI training and briefing sessions.
- Report any concerns of poor practice and un-safe programming.

- Make sure that anyone who works with or represents GERI is made aware of and understands the GERI Code of Conduct and expected behaviours.
- Abide by relevant local laws in the jurisdiction where I work.

I will not:

- Act in any way that breaches GERI's Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures or in any way places children or anyone we are trying to help at risk of harm.
- Withhold information about any current criminal convictions, charges or civil proceedings including any relating to children, vulnerable communities or the abuse of anyone we are trying to help, or which may be relevant to my ability to carry out my duties, either when I join GERI or that arise during my time of employment with GERI or during the period in which I am representing GERI in any capacity.
- Engage in any form of sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of the age of consent or custom locally.
- Engage in a sexual relationship with a member of a vulnerable community unless I am part of the same community and the relationship has not arisen as part of my role with GERI
- Engage in any harmful and traditional practices including Female Genital Mutilation, Child Marriage and Enforced Marriage
- Use anyone under the age of 18 as a domestic worker.
- In anyway trivialise child abuse or the exploitation and harassment of adults.
- Take photographs, make films or audio recordings of children in the course of my duties, irrespective of the medium used. The only exception is where my work requires this and I have obtained express approval from GERI.
- Physically, sexually or emotionally harm or threaten to harm a child, vulnerable adult or anyone we are trying to help.
- Send private messages to children or anyone from a vulnerable community I have met through GERI, for example private messaging on social media channels. Unless I myself am from the vulnerable community and I am communicating with my family members
- Interfere with the complainant or witnesses or hamper any investigation or enquiry, which is being carried out into a child safeguarding, staff or concerns from the people we serve.
- Drink alcohol during working hours or use harmful substances
- Not supply alcohol or harmful substances to a child or vulnerable adult.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child or anyone we are trying to help that they can do themselves, such as bathing.
- Place children or any other people we serve in unsafe situations.
- Engage in relationships, which could be an abuse of trust, for example engaging in a sexual relationship family members of the people we are serving.
- Allow concerns, allegations or suspicions of abuse or poor practice to go unreported.

4. Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct

I will:

- Strive for high standards in my work.
- Take responsibility for my actions.

I will not:

- Abuse my position of power as a representative of GERI.
- Behave in a way that undermines my ability to do my job or is likely to bring GERI into disrepute.
- Engage in any form of prostituted sex.
- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual favours or engage in any form of sexual exploitation.
- Discriminate or use discriminatory language with regard to sexual orientation, gender, age, ethnicity, disability and religion, etc.
- View, download, create or distribute inappropriate material, such as pornography, on GERI computer/systems, or any other computer systems, including my own personal property.
- Drink alcohol or use any other substances in a way that affects my ability to carry out my role or affects the reputation of the organisation.
- Be in possession of, nor profit from the sale of, illegal goods or substances.
- Ask for, or invite any personal payment, service or favour from others, especially from the people we serve, in return for our help, support, goods or services of any kind.
- Accept bribes or gifts, except small tokens of appreciation from governments, the people we serve, donors, suppliers or others, which have been offered because of my employment or other representational role with GERI.
- Enter into any sort of business relationship on behalf of SCI with family, friends or other personal/professional contacts for the supply of any goods or services to GERI or any employment related matters without authorisation from GERI
- Have any connection to terrorist activity or Prohibited Parties
- Engage in any financial transaction (personally or with GERI funds) or engage in activities which supports a prohibited party (i.e. and organisation or person proscribed or designated on a government list).
Use my own or GERI's funds or property for purposes of terrorism.

5. Seek to protect the safety and wellbeing of myself and those carrying out duties for, and representing GERI

I will:

- Be fully aware of and comply with local GERI health, safety and security policies, practices, and highlight any areas of concern to management.
- Actively work to create a safe working environment that is free from all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation, for all employees and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity
- Ensure that my standards of conduct do not cause offence and do not encourage unacceptable behaviour on the part of others
- Report any concerns about unacceptable behaviour towards others.

I will not:

- Behave in a way that causes unexpected risk, upset or harm to others or myself.

6. Protect Save the Children's Assets and Resources

I will:

- Handle GERI's financial and other resources carefully, ensuring they are not misused and are protected from theft, fraud and damage.

I will not:

- Release to others, any private and confidential information relating to GERI (or for which we are responsible) unless legally required to do so.

7. Report any incident or concern that relates to, or may relate to, a breach of the Code of Conduct.

I will

- Recognise that in order to realise our ambitious goals for children, GERI must effectively report and respond to any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing of any employee or other representative working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity. In addition, that all employees and other representatives working for or on behalf of the organisation in any capacity must raise any concerns they may have about the conduct of others or the way we operate as an organisation.
- Raise any matter that I believe is or may be a breach of the Code of Conduct through the appropriate channels.

CODE OF CONDUCT PERSONAL DECLARATION

I -----CONFIRM THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD, AND SHALL ABIDE BY THE CODE OF CONDUCT PRINCIPLES FOR THE ENTIRE PERIOD I AM WORKING OR ASSOCIATED WITH, AND OR REPRESENT, [GIRLS EDUCATION RESPONSE INITIATIVE](#). I UNDERSTAND THAT VIOLATION OF ANY OF THE ABOVE PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS IN THE CODE OF CONDUCT CAN, RESULT INTO THE DEGREE OF SEVERITY, RESULT IN IMMEDIATE DISCIPLINARY ACTION WHICH CAN INCLUDE DISMISSAL.

I WILL RAISE THROUGH APPROPRIATE CHANNELS ANY MATTER WHICH APPEARS TO BREACH THE STANDARDS CONTAINED WITHIN THIS CODE OF CONDUCT

SIGNATURE

.....

Name in block letters

.....

JOB TITLE

.....

DATE

.....

SECTION 3: DEFINITIONS

Word/Term	Definition
Child	<i>A Human being under the age of 18</i>
People We Serve	<i>The individuals, groups, or organizations, whether targeted or not, that benefit positively, directly or indirectly, from the development intervention</i>
Vulnerable Community	<i>The local communities which GERI works within a programmatic Location</i>
Sexual Harassment	<i>Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose, or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Such conduct may take place on a single occasion or on several occasions.</i> <i>Sexual harassment may take the form of unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct, which may include - but is not limited to - the following:</i> <i>Unwanted physical contact, ranging from touching to sexual assault and rape.</i> <i>(b) Verbal forms of sexual harassment including unwelcome innuendoes, suggestions and hints, sexual advances, comments with sexual overtones, sex-related jokes or insults or unwelcome graphic comments about a person's body made in their presence or directed toward them, unwelcome and inappropriate enquiries about a person's sex life, and sexual orientation, directed at a person or group of persons.</i> <i>(c) Non-verbal forms of sexual harassment including unwelcome gestures, whistling, indecent exposure, or the unwelcome display of sexually explicit pictures or objects.</i> <i>(d) Unwelcome messages of a sexual nature that are sent via email, SMS, skype, voice messages and other electronic means, whether using GERI IT/devices or personal mobiles/equipment.</i> <i>(d) Sexual harassment that is linked to recruitment/employment opportunities, promotion, training or development opportunities, and the offer of salary increments or other employee benefits in exchange for sexual favours.</i>
Child Safeguarding (Save the Children's definition)	<i>Child Safeguarding is making Save the Children safe for children. It involves our collective and individual responsibility and actions to ensure that all children are protected from deliberate or unintentional acts that lead to the risk of or actual harm by Save the Children staff, representatives and third parties, who come into contact with children or impact them through our development interventions, humanitarian responses and operations. This includes our direct programme implementation, work through partners and management of children's personal data</i>
Child Abuse	<i>Child abuse consists of anything, which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of a safe and healthy development into adulthood.</i>
Physical Abuse	<i>Physical abuse is the non-accidental use of physical force that deliberately or inadvertently causes a risk of/ or actual injury to a child. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing non-accidental physical harm to a child. Physical harm can also be caused when a parent or caregiver fabricates the symptoms of, or</i>

	<i>deliberately induces, illness or temporary, permanent injury or disability of a child.</i>
Neglect	<i>Neglect includes but is not limited to failing to provide adequate food, sufficient or seasonally appropriate clothing and /or shelter.</i> <i>Neglect is also failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment or providing inappropriate medical treatment (e.g. administering medication when not authorized); or failing to provide a safe physical environment (e.g. exposure to violence, unsafe programming location, unsafe sleeping practices, releasing a child to an unauthorized adult, access to weapons or harmful objects, failing to child-proof a space that children will occupy etc.). It can also be GERI staff, partners, contractors and sub-grantees failing to apply minimum requirements as set out in mandatory procedures.</i>
Emotional Abuse	<i>Emotional abuse involves doing harm to a child's emotional, intellectual, mental or psychological development. This may occur as an isolated event or on an ongoing basis. Emotional abuse includes but is not limited to any humiliating or degrading treatment (e.g. bad name-calling, threats, yelling/screaming/cursing, teasing, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming etc.), failure to meet a child's emotional needs, and rejecting, ignoring, terrorizing, isolating or confining a child.</i>
Sexual Abuse	<i>Sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Adult males do not solely perpetrate sexual abuse. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.</i>
Exploitation and child labour	<i>Child exploitation is an umbrella term used to describe the abuse of children who are forced, tricked, coerced or trafficked into exploitative activities. For Save the Children child exploitation includes modern slavery and trafficking of children and children forced or recruited into armed conflict. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity;</i> <i>(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or</i> <i>(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual.</i> <i>Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur with the use of technology. Within Girls Education Response Initiative child sexual abuse and exploitation also includes child early and forced marriage.</i>

	<i>Child Labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It is work that:</i> <i>is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and</i> <i>interferes with their schooling by:</i> <i>depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;</i> <i>obliging them to leave school prematurely; or</i> <i>requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.</i> <i>If a young person, under the age of 18 is part of an apprenticeship scheme within the statutory law of the country and does not meet any of the above, this would not be considered by GERI as child labour. However, any contractor or sub-contractor must inform GERI of the name of any apprentice who will be directly involved with our work.</i>
Prohibited Parties	<i>Individual's or entities that are proscribed or designated on an official government, EU or UN list because such person or entity is involved directly or indirectly in terrorist activities or activity on behalf of a sanctioned country.</i>

SECTION 4

SUPPORTING/RELATED DOCUMENTATION

Links to Supporting Documentation	
1.	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child UN Declaration of Human Rights UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
2.	GERI Child Safeguarding Policy
3.	GERI Whistleblowing Policy
4.	GERI Disciplinary Policy
5.	GERI Anti-Harassment Policy
6.	GERI Fraud policy
8.	GERI Prohibited Transactions and Money Laundering Policy
7.	GERI IT Acceptable Use Policy
8.	GERI Social Media Policy
9.	GERI Data Protection Policy

