



ISLAMIC CHARITY FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE
ICFESW

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VULNERABLE ADULTS PROTECTION POLICY

Ensuring the dignity, safety and rights of vulnerable adults in ICFESW programmes

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1. STATEMENT

ICFESW recognises that adults while not children can also be in situations of heightened vulnerability due to age, disability, displacement, illness, poverty or social isolation. This policy establishes standards for the protection of vulnerable adults across all ICFESW programmes and operational contexts in the Extrême-Nord of Cameroon and beyond.

2. DEFINITION OF VULNERABLE ADULT

For the purposes of this policy, a vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 years or older who:

- Has a physical or mental disability that limits their capacity to protect themselves from harm.
- Is affected by serious illness and is receiving medical or psychosocial support.
- Is elderly and experiencing diminished capacity or social isolation.
- Is displaced, living in a refugee or IDP camp, or in transitional accommodation.
- Is a survivor of GBV, trafficking or conflict-related violence.
- Is in extreme poverty limiting their ability to make free and informed choices.

3. PRINCIPLES

- Respect for autonomy: vulnerable adults retain the right to make their own decisions and ICFESW supports rather than directs their choices.
- Dignity: all interactions with vulnerable adults are conducted with respect for their human dignity.
- Privacy: personal information about vulnerable adults is protected in accordance with ICFESW's data protection standards.
- Empowerment: ICFESW programmes aim to increase not create dependency in the capacity of vulnerable adults.
- Non-discrimination: protection extends to all vulnerable adults regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion or disability.

4. SAFE CONDUCT STANDARDS

4.1 Professional Relationships

- All staff maintain professional boundaries with vulnerable adults at all times.
- Staff do not enter into personal, financial or sexual relationships with beneficiaries.
- Home visits or one-on-one meetings with vulnerable adults are conducted by at least two staff members, or with a community witness.

4.2 Consent and Participation

- Free, prior and informed consent is obtained before any vulnerable adult participates in ICFESW activities, research or media.
- Consent is obtained in an accessible format, verbal, signed or witnessed, appropriate to the individual's capacity.
- Consent can be withdrawn at any time without penalty.

4.3 Specific Contexts — Medical and Psychosocial Support

- Staff providing psychosocial support to vulnerable adults maintain professional therapeutic boundaries.
- Medical or psychosocial information about vulnerable adults is treated with strict confidentiality.
- Referrals to specialised services are made with the individual's consent and full information.

5. RECOGNITION OF ABUSE AND HARM

Indicator	Possible Concern
Unexplained injuries or bruising	Physical abuse
Withdrawal, anxiety or depression	Psychological abuse or neglect
Financial irregularities, loss of assets	Financial exploitation
Fear of particular staff member or caregiver	Possible abuse by that individual
Inappropriate sexual contact or remarks	Sexual exploitation or harassment
Poor hygiene, malnutrition, inadequate shelter	Neglect

6. REPORTING

- Any concern regarding the abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult is reported immediately to the ICFESW Safeguarding Focal Point.
- Reports are acknowledged within 24 hours and investigated confidentially.
- Where there is immediate risk to life, local health or law enforcement authorities are contacted.
- Reporters are protected from retaliation.

7. ACCOUNTABILITY AND REVIEW

- This policy is reviewed annually by the Bureau Exécutif.
- All incidents involving vulnerable adults are included in the quarterly safeguarding report.
- Staff working intensively with vulnerable adults receive targeted training on a biennial basis.