

31 PROGRAM PARTICIPANT PROTECTION POLICY

31.7 Introduction

AwazCDS is aware that its development, humanitarian assistance during disasters and human rights programs can create a power differential between those who are employed by AwazCDS and the program participants. It acknowledges that there is potential for this power imbalance to be exploited by awards employees to acquire bribes, payment, gifts, and/or sexual favors.

31.8 Purpose

AwazCDS's Program Participant Protection Policy has been developed to ensure maximum protection of program participants from exploitation and to clarify the responsibilities of its employees and the standards of behavior expected of them.

31.9 Rights of Program Participants

All program participants have the same rights to absolute freedom from exploitation as any other human being. Such rights are prescribed in, among other documents, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (LDH) the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and in the national laws of Pakistan.

31.10 Policy Guidelines

It is AwazCDS policy to take all steps that are reasonably possible to protect program beneficiaries- children, women and men from harassment and abuse perpetrated by AwazCDS employees, AwazCDS's partner organizations, or official visitors to program such as those involved with AwazCDS work as children (individual under 18 years of age) and women, are considered most at risk from abuse, harassment and sexual violence. While recognizing that harassment and sexual violations of adult men does occur, the policy concentrates on the prevention of abuse of women and children, as this group is generally more at risk from forms of violence such as bullying, physical violence, political pressure and/or financial extortion.

31.11 Partner Agencies

AwazCDS Increasingly work with partner organizations and community based groups, with the results that there is less direct contact between its employees and program participants. However, acceptance of this policy by partner organizations, CBOs and PARCs is a requirement of any partnership agreement that AwazCDS enters into with other organizations. Wherever AwazCDS is working with supporting partner CBOs to work directly with program participants, the provision of this policy must be condition of every partnership agreement.

This policy shall be used as a tool to bring up the issue of staff conduct during negotiations with partner CBOs and PARCs. The relationship will be dependent on adherence to the principles contained in this policy document.

31.12 Measures

AwazCDS employees must be aware of the power dynamics that NGOs wittingly and unwittingly create within program participants' communities, and between employees and program participants. Abuse of power is often at the base of most incidents of harassment, exploitation and inappropriate behavior by employee. A number of simple measures can simply be taken to tackle unequal power relationships or to eliminate the chances of staff members exploiting their position of power.

As far as is possible, ensuring field teams are gender balance and that some women hold positions of seniority.

Making program participants aware of their entitlement to humanitarian assistance; of AwazCDS's employees' duty to deliver it without discrimination; that whatever goods or services are delivered cannot be withheld or withdrawn on the whim of one of more staff members and that it is unacceptable for AwazCDS employees to solicit or accept bribes, rewards, gifts, sexual favors, etc. from a program participant.

Clarifying the channels for lodging complaints by appointing and training one senior staff member in each field to be responsible for further training and awareness raising among all staff members and for investigating all complaints. This person should report directly to the Chief Executive (if s/he is not the designated contact person).

Ensuring that no individual employee of the organization can create a situation where s/he alone is perceived to be the sole and final authority in allocating benefits.

It is the responsibility of all senior management at field and head office levels to ensure that all employees, personnel from partner CBOs/PARCs, consultants, and visitors to AwazCDS are acquainted with the requirements of the policy. If acts have been committed in relation to AwazCDS program participants, which are criminal, grossly infringe children's rights, or contravene the participants contained in this document, the organization will take immediate action appropriate to the circumstance. This may mean for:

Person	Action
Staff/Volunteers	disciplinary action/dismissal
Partner CBO / PARCs personnel	review of staffing policy/withdrawal of support
Contractor/Consultants	termination of contract
Visitors to AwazCDS	removal from field operation

Any action taken will be in accordance with AwazCDS's policies and procedures.

Depending upon the nature, circumstances and location of the case, AwazCDS will involve appropriate authorities to ensure the protection of program participants, and initiate criminal prosecution where this is appropriate.

31.13 Local Culture

In order to be fully aware of the program participant protection issues AwazCDS faces, it is essential for AwazCDS employees to be aware of local culture and religious practices. It should not be forgotten that cultural misunderstanding could be a two-way problem. However, 'culture' can never be an excuse or motive for inappropriate behavior.

31.14 Relationship with Program Participants

As employee of AwazCDS, staff members have potentially greater access to goods, services and power than members of the program participant communities, and this greater access could be used to pressure or exploit program participants. All employees are obliged to declare potential conflicts of interest, exercise discretion, professionalism and good judgment when there is a relationship between AwazCDS employees and program participants. Similarly, it is expected that employees declare potential conflicts of interest between themselves and (potential) sub-contractors and applicants for positions within AwazCDS.

AwazCDS believe that children deserve special protection and that the employees should carryout their duties in ways that do not violate the rights of the child.

While recognizing that AwazCDS employees are often also members of the program participant community, and therefore may be married or have long-established relationship in the program participant community. AwazCDS strongly discourages staff from engaging sexual relationships with members of communities with whom they are working directly and reserves the right to action where AwazCDS deems it appropriate, which may include disciplinary action/dismissal.

31.15 Review

The implementation of this policy will be monitored through a range of instruments such as program, field and sector evaluation.

AwazCDS recognizes both internal and external environment changes. Such change may have a bearing on the scope and contents of this policy. Consequently, it will be reviewed periodically. The review process will be consultative and participatory in nature. The responsibility for initiating the policy review process rests with the HR Section, but will be guided by AwazCDS's Management and the Board