In accordance with the mission and practice of Women’s Refugee Commission, Inc. (WRC) and principles of international law and codes of conduct, all WRC representatives, including both international and national, board members, regular full- and part-time staff (including temporary staff), interns, contractors, partners, sub-awardees and volunteers, are responsible for promoting respect for fundamental human rights, social justice, human dignity and respect for the equal rights of men, women and children. While respecting the dignity and worth of every individual, the WRC representative will treat all persons equally without distinction whatsoever of race, gender, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, disability, political conviction or any other distinguishing feature.

The WRC representatives recognize that they have a duty of care to beneficiaries and a responsibility to ensure that beneficiaries are treated with dignity and respect and that certain minimum standards of behavior are observed.

Displacement as a result of conflict or natural disaster may lead to an increase in poverty, dependency and powerlessness. Women and girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence in crisis settings although men, boys, and others with intersecting social markers such as disability or gender identity may also be at high risk. The uncertainty in access to, and the unequal distribution of, resources such as food and material goods, can put women, girls, and other marginalized populations at a greater risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and lead to negative coping strategies such as exchanging sex for money or food to survive.1

WRC strictly prohibits sexual exploitation and abuse by its representatives and has a zero tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse. Any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse must be promptly reported; and alleged victims of sexual exploitation and abuse shall be referred for immediate, professional assistance.

What is Sexual Exploitation and Abuse?

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; “sexual abuse” means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual exploitation and abuse can take many forms2

- Sexual exploitation involves a person demanding sex or sexual favors from someone in a vulnerable position in exchange for money, shelter, firewood or fuel for cooking, food or other goods or services. Perpetrators can include staff of the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs); as well as consultants, interns, volunteers and contractors; and military personnel.

---

• Sexual abuse is:
  o Threatening or forcing an individual to have sex. This includes rape.
  o The invasion of any part of the body of the victim with a sexual organ; or of the anal or genital
    opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body; or against a person incapable
    of giving genuine consent.
  o Any unwelcome and unwanted sexual advance, unsolicited sexual attention, demand for sexual
    access or favors, sexual innuendo or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, display of
    pornographic material, inappropriate touching or gestures, and harassment by force or under
    unequal or coercive conditions.

WRC rigorously enforces the United Nations (UN) Secretary General’s Bulletin on the Protection from Sexual
Exploitation and Abuse of Beneficiaries as a standard for professional conduct among our staff.\(^3\) Therefore, all
representatives of the WRC must concur with the Inter-agency Standing Committee’s (IASC’s) six core
principles of its code of conduct\(^4\) as listed below and will adhere to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse
against Beneficiaries and Persons of Concern.

(1) Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitutes gross misconduct and are therefore
grounds for termination of employment and/or other contractual relationship.
(2) 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 regarding the age of a child is not a defense.
(3) Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of
humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that
is due to beneficiaries.
(4) Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discourage since
they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility
and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
(5) Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation
by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via
established agency reporting mechanisms.
(6) Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual
exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all
levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this
environment.

In addition, the WRC also requires the relevant (CBO) or (INGO) to comply with its standards for
preventing sexual exploitation and abuse as a part of all sub-award agreement documents or requires that
all organizations being contracted with have their own Codes of Conduct, inclusive of measures to prevent
sexual exploitation and abuse, and mechanisms for enforcement.

If you have a complaint about the conduct of a WRC representative or about the work of the organization,
or wish to make a report, email ethics@wrcommission.org or call +1.212.551.3115 and leave a message
that you wish to discuss an ethics issue. Someone will get in touch with you to follow up.

Updated: June 2019

\(^3\) UN, Secretary General’s Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
(ST/SGB/2003/13).
June 2002.
I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I have read and understand this Code of Conduct. I commit myself to exercise my duties as a representative of the WRC in accordance with the Code of Conduct. I understand that if I do not conform to the Code of Conduct, I will face disciplinary actions.

Employee’s name and signature: Date:

Supervisor’s name and signature: Date: