

**RWANDA MEN'S RESOURCE CENTER (RWAMREC)**

# Conflict of Interest Policy



## **RWANDA MEN'S RESOURCE CENTER (RWAMREC)**

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# Abbreviations

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**CLADHO:** Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Defense des Droits de l'Homme

**CNF:** National Women's Council

**EACSO:** East Africa Civil Society Organizations Forum

**EIGE:** European Institute of Gender Equality

**FFRP:** RwandaForum for Women Parliamentarians

**GBV:** Gender Based Violence

**GEF:** Global Environment Facility

**GMO:** Gender Monitoring Office

**HIV:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**ICRW:** International Center for Research on Women

**MIGEPROFE:** Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

**M&E:** Monitoring and Evaluation

**NGP:** National Gender Policy

**NGOs:** Non Governmental Organizations

**PTCs:** Parents and Teachers' Committees

**RBC:** Rwanda Biomedical Center

**RWAMREC:** Rwanda Men' Resource Center

**UN:** United Nations

**UNDP:** United Nations Development Program

**VSL:** Voluntary Savings and Loans

## I. Introduction

### **1.1 About RWAMREC**

The Government of Rwanda has been addressing gender-based violence (GBV) through policy initiative, government commitment, legal frame work and awareness raising among others; however, this strategy has its own limits given statistics which indicate continued growing numbers of violence cases in our society. Many campaigns were directed at men as perpetrators of violence but not much has been done to engage them as partners in the fight against Gender Based Violence (GBV).

It is the above realization that resulted in the formation of the Rwanda Men's Resource Centre in April 2007 whose task is to work toward involving men and boys in the fight against GBV. RWAMREC believes that engaging men to influence or prevent their peers from committing the offence is an effective prescriptive strategy rather than punitive mechanisms. Rwanda Men's Resource Centre promotes the idea of "bringing all men on board" in the fight against gender-based violence in order to challenge in an effective way stereotypes related to gender inequalities and negative masculinity in our social structures and individual male behaviors.

RWAMREC was created by nine like-minded men of different experiences in gender and other social disciplines with an aim of involving as many males as possible in the national effort of mitigating gender-based violence in Rwanda, following the shocking caseload of rape and other gender-based violence acts, as well as gross women and children's rights abuse being experienced in our country, as reported by the national police and other actors involved in this area.

The membership of RWAMREC is growing fast, and we are proud to have been associated with other international men's networks in addition to local women organizations involved in the fight against gender based violence. Nonetheless, RWAMREC will require assistance from all positive-minded men countrywide and other sister organizations that subscribe to its noble cause in order to get the support needed to carry out the work it is set out to do.

## **1.2 Vision, Mission, and Core Values**

RWAMREC is guided by the following principles as set in the organizations vision, mission and core values which are:

### *1.2.1 Vision*

A peaceful society where women and men share roles/responsibilities in raising families and governing society through equality and respect.

### *1.2.2 Mission*

To promote gender equality through reconstruction of a non-violent identity of a man, promoting adoption of non- violent masculine behaviors in order to become positive and supportive partners of women in ending sexual and gender based violence, supporting men to become role models for peer men and change agents in promoting healthy families, engaging men to support and partner with women for women's empowerment, and engaging men to act as positive fathers and parents who display non-risky behaviors that are harmful to themselves and others.

### *1.2.3 Core Values*

1. **Equality and respect:** RWAMREC is committed to the promotion of equality and respect of both males and females.
2. **Non-violent identity of man:** Continuous mobilization and education for mindset change is key for men to acquire or/and improve their non-violent identity and positive masculine behaviors in order to become supportive partners of women in ending sexual and gender based violence.
3. **Men's engagement:** RWAMREC believes that engaging men to influence or prevent their peers from committing the offence is an effective prescriptive strategy rather than punitive mechanisms.
4. **Partnership:** Due to the crucial importance of its mission, RWAMREC is highly committed to partnership creation with relevant organizations in the same line of objectives to aim at unified effort.

5. **Contribution to social well being:** RWAMREC's endeavors ensure that men are to become role models for their peer men and change agents in promoting healthy families, engaging men to support and partner with women for women's empowerment, and engaging men to act as positive fathers and parents who display non-risky behaviors that are not harmful to themselves and others.

### ***1.3 Short Description of the Board of Directors***

The Board of Directors is comprised of founder members of RWAMREC. The Board is made up of the President, the Vice-President, the Treasurer, the Secretary General, and three (3) Advisors.

### ***1.4 Beneficiaries***

The main beneficiaries of RWAMREC are men, women, boys and girls, who need a safe environment in which they lead a life free of violence. Individual men, government institutions and other partner civil society and private sector organizations are the main actors in the efforts of fighting gender-based Violence and hereby constitute secondary beneficiaries at country level.

### ***1.5 Implementation of RWAMREC Activities***

All activities of RWAMREC will be implemented by the Executive Secretariat under direct supervision of the BD. The Executive Director shall be responsible for the management of the daily activities of RWAMREC.

### ***1.6 Operational Strategy***

The Executive Secretariat shall be established and will operate under direct supervision of the BD. The Executive Secretariat shall have other departments and various posts according to its growing capacity and needs with time. The BD reports to the General Assembly (GA) of the organization.

## II. Conflict of Interest Policy

### ***2.1 Introduction to Conflict of Interest***

We welcome you to the Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC) and hope your will experience good relationship, professionalism and ethical manners. The conditions contained in this policy comply with laws, decrees and decisions of employment in Rwanda. In case of conflict, the relevant law of Rwanda shall take precedence.

### ***2.2 Purpose and Scope***

As a non-profit seeking organization and human-rights based, RWAMREC faces potential or actual Conflict of Interest situations on a regular basis. Conflicts of Interest management is relevant both on individual as well as institutional level in RWAMREC's organization. RWAMREC is committed to promoting relationship integrity and fair treatment of all stakeholders in its dealings. All Employees are required to act in a fair, honest and professional manner and in accordance with the best interest of RWAMREC's partners and beneficiaries. In order to act upon these commitments and ensure appropriate governance of RWAMREC, it is essential to have effective controls in place regarding Conflicts of Interest. The purpose of this Board Resolution ("Resolution") is to outline RWAMREC's approach to Conflict-of-Interest management to enable development and maintenance of an effective control environment for Conflict-of-interest management.

This Resolution sets forth the high level organizational and administrative procedures to identify and manage actual and potential Conflicts of Interest in RWAMREC as part of its corporate governance and operational activities. This Resolution shall be implemented throughout RWAMREC taking into consideration any local requirements.

All employees of RWAMREC, including non-permanent staff working on behalf of

of RWAMREC, persons involved in the provision of services on behalf of RWAMREC under an outsourcing agreement, Senior Management, Board members and the Executive Director of RWAMREC are subject to this Resolution.

### ***2.3 Conflict of Interest Description within RWAMREC***

All employees shall be obliged to avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest. Staff relationships and transactions with individuals outside the organization and with other business shall be conducted in a professional and ethical manner. Since a conflict of interest raises both moral and legal issues, and it is difficult to define the various circumstances and relationships that would be considered unethical; although not exhaustive, the following offers guidelines meant to provide a general definition and description of the nature of conflict of interest:

- a. An actual or potential conflict of interest shall occur when an employee in a position to influence decisions that may result in a personal gain for them or their relatives because of RWAMREC activity dealings.
- b. It is a requirement that employees disclose any influence/tendency that denotes favoritism, nepotism or transactions involving purchases, contracts, or leases to the BoD. This shall include direct dealings with vendors, the public, or competitors. Employees shall always refrain from any activity that would be or cause the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- c. Employees that have family relationships of the first degree should not be in the same project/department or in the same decision-making process to avoid influencing decision making in the chain of command. This applies also for Board Members. RWAMREC should avoid recruiting employees that have family relationships in the same department.
- d. Outside Employment

The personnel of RWAMREC shall not have any other employment, business or commercial activity that may compromise the position as appointed. It is also forbidden to use any RWAMREC equipment or facilities and time for outside employment, including the use of telephones, photocopier or computers, vehicles, etc.

## **2.4 Policy Cover (people concern)**

This Resolution is applicable for all GA and BD and staff members across RWAMREC's structure. Compliance verification is to be done by the Internal Auditor who has to report to the Board of Directors.

## **2.5 Definitions**

A *Conflict of Interest* is a situation where competing interests or loyalties can potentially inappropriately influence a decision or activity in RWAMREC and/or cause detriment to RWAMREC or one or more of RWAMREC's stakeholders.

A **Potential Conflict of Interest** is a reasonably foreseen situation where *Conflict of Interest* may arise conditional to certain circumstances or events.

An **Actual Conflict of Interest** is a situation where the arising of a *Conflict of Interest* is not conditional to future circumstances or events. A **Permanent Conflict of Interest** is a situation where the *Conflict of Interest* persists and needs to be managed on an ongoing basis. A **Coincidental Conflict of Interest** is a situation which occurs with regard to a specific event (e.g. a transaction, the selection of service provider, etc.) and which can usually be managed with a one-off preventive or mitigating measure.

An **Institutional Conflict of Interest** means *Conflicts of Interest* arising with regard to different activities, beneficiaries, roles, functions, business lines, department or units in RWAMREC or with regard to external stakeholders including GA or BD members.

An **Individual Conflict of Interest** means a *Conflict of Interest* arising with regards to an Employee's, a GA or BD member's private interest or with regards to their past or present personal or professional relationships. The **Interest of Closest Family Members** shall be included in this category to the extent that the concerned person is aware of the interest.

*Closest Family Member* refers to the Employee's, GA or BD member's spouse, registered partner, cohabitee, underage children or step-children (even if not sharing the same household) and grown up children or step-children sharing the same household.

*Principal* means any natural or non-natural person whose financial matters the Employee's, GA or BD member has legal authority to manage, whether under an agent-principal relationship (for example, a power of attorney) or any other legal basis.

*Employee means* all persons employed by RWAMREC, including non-permanent staff working on behalf of RWAMREC (e.g., consultants) and persons involved in the provision of advocacy services on behalf of RWAMREC under an outsourcing agreement. Members of Senior Management are also included in Employees.

*Senior Management* means the ED, Head or Director of any department across RWAMREC structure. GA means the General Assembly and BD means the Board of Directors of RWAMREC. Resolution means this policy on Conflicts of Interest.

*Linked Person* means any legal or natural persons directly or indirectly linked to RWAMREC by control (for example, GA member of RWAMREC).

## ***2.6 Identifying Conflicts of Interest***

Identifying and managing Conflicts of Interest is a central requirement for RWAMREC as a human-rights advocacy institution. A Conflict of Interest can arise in the context of RWAMREC's different services, activities, roles, beneficiaries, Employees, Senior Managers, board members, functions, business lines and other related legal entities, with regard to external stakeholders or any other parties. Both Potential Conflicts of Interest and Actual Conflicts of Interest are required to be identified and addressed according to this Resolution.

With regards to conflicts of interests, a follow-up on familiarity and personal relationship among the staff should be made. The Management should disclose

any familiarity and other close relationship among the officers, Managers, Board members, committees if any and kept in staff files, in case there is no relationship this should be disclosed too in a well labeled statement and file them in the staff file.

## ***2.7 Individual and Institutional Conflicts of Interests***

*Conflicts of Interest* arising with regards to a GA, a BD member or an Employee's private interest or with regards to their past or present personal or professional relationships are defined *Individual Conflicts of Interest*. The interest of *Closest Family members* or *Principals* shall be included in this category to the extent that the concerned person is aware of the interest. Past professional or personal relationships from the period of last five years shall be considered relevant in assessing whether an *Individual Conflict of Interest* arises. *Individual Conflicts of Interest* can arise between RWAMREC and a GA or BD member or an Employee, between different Employees, between an Employee and their manager or between an Employee and third parties like RWAMREC's beneficiaries, supplier, service providers etc. *Conflicts of Interest* not arising from private interest, but in connection to RWAMREC's organization, structure, governance, different activities, roles, services or any other circumstances are defined as *Institutional Conflicts of Interest*.

*Institutional Conflicts of Interest* can arise with regard to individual persons as well as larger groups of people or units, decision-making bodies, legal entities or other non-individuals. *Institutional Conflicts of Interest* may also arise with regard to any external stakeholders like beneficiaries, partners, suppliers, service providers including any Linked Persons.

When a Conflict of Interest arises between the different roles and responsibilities assigned to a BD or to an Employee within or by RWAMREC, the Conflict of Interest is an Institutional Conflict of Interest even though it affects an individual Employee. Also *Conflicts of Interest* arising between two or more of RWAMREC's beneficiaries are *Institutional Conflicts of Interest*. The division between these two

categories is made in order to ensure that the procedures for managing the different types of situations are proportional to the nature of the Conflict of Interest and its potential impact on RWAMREC or RWAMREC's beneficiaries.

### ***2.8 Conflicts of Interest Potentially Detrimental to Beneficiaries or Clients***

To ensure fair treatment of beneficiaries or clients and RWAMREC's services being aligned with the beneficiaries or clients' needs and best interest, it is important to identify which Individual or Institutional Conflicts of Interest could be potentially detrimental to beneficiaries or clients. In connection to each identified Conflict of Interest the potential beneficiaries or client's impact shall be assessed. The development of advocacy services shall include a review of Conflicts of Interest especially considering the risks to beneficiaries or clients.

### ***2.9 Managing Conflicts of Interest***

All *Potential or Actual Conflicts of Interest* must be identified and appropriate preventive or mitigating measures must be implemented in the form of effective organizational and administrative measures. In order to have appropriate procedures in place to address both *Individual and Institutional Conflicts of Interest*, this chapter is divided according to these categories. Both categories of *Conflicts of Interest* can entail risk of detriment to RWAMREC or RWAMREC's beneficiaries or clients.

### ***2.10 Managing Individual Conflicts of Interest***

When an *Actual or Potential Individual Conflict of Interest* has been identified, a materiality assessment shall be conducted. The materiality assessment shall include a review of any potential detrimental effects the Conflict of Interest may entail for RWAMREC or RWAMREC's beneficiaries or clients. Also, potential reputational risks shall be taken into consideration as part of the assessment. For all material *Individual Conflicts of Interest* and any *Conflict of Interest* posing a risk of detriment to one or more of RWAMREC's beneficiaries or clients, effective preventive or mitigating measures shall be decided upon and implemented.

Compliance department shall be consulted before the decision-making at least regarding material *Conflicts of Interest*. It should also be assessed whether the *Individual Conflict of Interest* is Permanent, requiring ongoing preventive or mitigating measures or Coincidental, meaning that it can be managed with a one-off measure.

RWAMREC applies a principle of independence meaning that GA, BD members or Employees shall not handle matters on behalf of RWAMREC where he/she or a Closest Family Member, a Principal or otherwise closely associated person or company who/which may have an interest which conflicts with the interests of RWAMREC or its beneficiaries, clients, suppliers or partners.

### **2.11 External Engagements**

RWAMREC supports its Employees contributing to society or being otherwise active in external engagements outside of their employment in RWAMREC. Still, it is important for RWAMREC to ensure that Employees' external engagements do not give rise to *Conflicts of Interest* or negatively affect the Employees' work duties, capabilities or RWAMREC in general. To ensure this, the Employees' external engagements are subject to a pre-approval by the immediate supervisor and any non-approved external engagements are prohibited. Each Employee is responsible for seeking approval for their external engagements prior to engaging in them. The external engagement approval shall be reviewed annually. Compliance department shall be consulted prior to granting approval. Engagements that the Employees are assigned based on their Employment in RWAMREC are not considered external engagements, but as part of RWAMREC's governance where *Conflicts of Interest* are to be managed as part of *Institutional Conflicts of Interest* management. Any exceptions to the External Engagement rules must be reviewed by Compliance department and approved by ED.

### **2.12 Managing Institutional Conflicts of Interest**

*Conflict of Interest* management is a central aspect to consider in changing or designing new organizational structures, activities or services within RWAMREC.

The established organizational structures, reporting lines and other governance arrangements shall be designed to support effective *Conflict of Interest* management. When an *Actual or Potential Institutional Conflict of Interest* is identified, the situation shall be assessed to identify risks that it poses to RWAMREC or RWAMREC's beneficiaries or clients including reputational risks. After assessing the risks, adequate preventive or mitigating measures shall be decided upon. Compliance department shall be consulted each time before the decision-making. The organizational and administrative measures shall be implemented in an effective manner to prevent or mitigate the risk of damage to RWAMREC or one or more of RWAMREC's beneficiaries, clients or suppliers.

### **2.13 Documentation**

RWAMREC shall have a *Conflict of Interest* register to record the identified Conflicts of Interest.

- Identified *Institutional Conflicts of Interest* shall be documented in a register describing the kinds of services, roles, activities or any other aspects that may give rise to an actual or potential *Institutional Conflict of Interest*. The records shall include a description of effective measures to manage the situation.
- Identified *Individual Conflicts of Interest* shall be recorded in a register including a description of the effective measures to manage the situation.
- The documentation of all *Conflicts of Interest* shall include a statement on whether the *Conflict of Interest* has potential beneficiary or client impact.
- The recorded items are to be reviewed at least annually to ensure up to date documentation. This annual review shall consider the reviewing of activities and services to identify new or previously unidentified *Conflicts of Interest*.
- Each Employee shall be aware of the identified *Conflicts of Interest* and agreed preventive or mitigating measures that are relevant for his or her role and duties.

### **2.14 Reporting**

All identified Individual Conflicts of Interest or changed circumstances shall be reported to the supervisor of the individual Employee involved or to the BD if a BD

member was involved. All Actual or Potential Conflicts of Interest or changed circumstances regarding an Institutional Conflict of Interest shall be reported to the supervisor responsible for the department the Conflict of Interest potentially impacts. Consultants or other persons with a temporary assignment for RWAMREC shall report identified Individual or Institutional RWAMREC to their respective liaison supervisors in RWAMREC that are responsible for their assignments. Senior Management shall receive recurring and at least annual reporting on the Institutional Conflicts of Interest identified in RWAMREC. The BD shall receive information relevant for overseeing the effective implementation of this Policy. This includes information on Institutional Conflicts of Interest that have potential institutional level impact.

### **III. Roles and Responsibilities of the Governing Bodies**



#### ***3.1 Board of Directors (BoDs)***

The BD is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this Policy. To ensure that the decision making is objective and impartial, also the BD and each BD member is subject to the requirements of this Policy. The BD members shall proactively identify any Actual or Potential Conflicts of Interest and disclose such a Conflict of Interest immediately to the Chairman of the BD and recuse themselves from decision-making regarding matters where a Conflict of Interest could have any impact.

In identifying and assessing Conflicts of Interest, the perception of Conflicts of Interest shall also be considered. The initial and ongoing assessment of suitability of members of the BD is done according to the BD Resolution on suitability. Also, within the suitability assessment process Actual and Potential Conflicts of Interests are identified and assessed. In case material Conflicts of Interest are found, adequate preventive or mitigating measures are decided on by the Chairman of the BD and required disclosures are made to the relevant supervisory authorities.

All identified Conflicts of Interest in relation to the BD or individual BD members shall be documented. The external engagement related requirements in this Policy do not apply to BD members. Each material Conflict of Interest shall be reported to the Chairman of the Board and to the Compliance Officer (Internal Auditor).

### ***3.2 The ED and Executive Management***

The ED of RWAMREC and the Internal Auditor are accountable for ensuring that this Policy is implemented in each department. This includes ensuring that the activities and functions in different departments are arranged in a way that promotes effective Conflict of Interest management, objective decision-making and avoidance of detriment to RWAMREC or RWAMREC's beneficiaries, suppliers or clients.

Each head of department is responsible for ensuring that all Employees in their respective areas work have sufficient skills and awareness to identify Conflicts of Interest and take the required action to address the situations appropriately. Each head of department shall ensure that relevant training on Conflicts of Interest is provided on a regular basis to Employees.

The ED in BD is responsible for overseeing that further guidance and establishing of relevant procedures and processes for identifying, managing and documenting Institutional and Individual Conflicts of Interest are coordinated on institutional level to ensure that risks are managed in a consistent manner and that cross Institutional Conflicts of Interest are identified and managed appropriately.

The ED of RWAMREC and each Head of Department are responsible for proactively identifying Actual or Potential Individual Conflicts of Interest that could impact on their duties and capability to make sound and objective decisions according to their role. Each Head of Department shall report immediately to the ED regarding an identified Individual Conflict of Interest. The ED shall report immediately to the Chairman of the BD upon identifying an Individual Conflict of Interest. Each material Conflict of Interest reported to the Chairman of the BD or to

to the BD of RWAMREC shall be at the same time reported to the Compliance Officer (Internal Auditor).

#### IV. Amendment

This policy will be amended as and when necessary.

These regulations are perpetual but keep evolving as time, condition and environment change, they are not final. The Board of Directors in consultation with the ED and with approval of the General Assembly reserves the right to amend these regulations with or without the consultation of the staff of RWAMREC. In any case, if any amendments are made irrespective of the employee's interpretation of such amendments, such amendments shall take immediate effect. The guiding principle here shall be that the Board of Directors members shall have made such alterations in favor of the organization. Any alteration made shall only take effect only after they are made available to all staff after approval by the BoDs and such amendments shall not be retrospective.

***Approved by the Board of Directors***

***Venant NZABONIMANA***

***Chairman Board of Directors***

