



# Safeguarding at CRS

FY21 ANNUAL REPORT

At Catholic Relief Services (CRS), we take seriously the safeguarding of those in our care. As a Catholic organization, our mission is rooted in protecting and upholding the dignity of every person – a cornerstone of just and thriving communities. Our faith knows no bounds when it comes to addressing poverty and injustice around the world and it requires a zero-tolerance approach to safeguarding those who put their trust in us.

We also recognize that increased transparency around the reporting of such cases is important to maintain the trust and confidence of those with whom we work and those who support our mission so generously and resolutely. It is in this spirit that CRS presents its second annual report on Safeguarding.

*CRS' commitment to Safeguarding is further outlined in the [InterAction CEO Pledge](#), of which CRS is a signatory*

## What is Safeguarding?

CRS defines Safeguarding as its responsibility to ensure that our staff and programs honor and protect the rights and dignity of all people – especially children and vulnerable adults – to live free from abuse and harm. This responsibility is codified in our Policy on Safeguarding, which sets clear standards for CRS staff, Board Members, affiliates, and those with whom we work – partners, suppliers, and service providers – regarding their obligations to respect all people and to actively prevent harassment, abuse, and exploitation, including all forms of sexual misconduct and human trafficking. The persons included in the scope of this policy are obligated to protect those who work for us, those with whom we work, and those whom we serve.

CRS' approach to Safeguarding is characterized by:



Zero-tolerance of inaction, which means that all allegations of harassment, abuse, and exploitation are taken seriously, assessed, and addressed as appropriate. Credible allegations of safeguarding policy violations are investigated, and appropriate and proportionate action is taken when violations have occurred.



Being survivor-centered, meaning CRS strives to be responsive to a survivor’s needs and preferences first and foremost, seeking to protect survivors from further harm, stigma, discrimination, retaliation, or other harmful consequences.

## FY21 Safeguarding Statistics

CRS works in 114 countries with 6,700 staff and over 2,000 partners around the world. During fiscal year 2021 (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021), CRS received 109 reports of potential Safeguarding Policy violations of which 74 were assessed as credible and investigated.

**TABLE 1: INVESTIGATED SAFEGUARDING ALLEGATIONS**

Allegation Type	Prohibited Behaviors	No. of Allegations
<b>Workplace harassment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sexual Harassment</li> <li>■ Non-sexual Harassment and Bullying</li> </ul>	53
<b>Exploitation and abuse of program participants or other relatively vulnerable persons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sexual Exploitation and Abuse</li> <li>■ Non-sexual Exploitation and Abuse</li> </ul>	9
<b>Other safeguarding violations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Failure to report</li> <li>■ Retaliation</li> </ul>	12

*To report a concern of harassment, abuse or exploitation, including trafficking of humans, visit [EthicsPoint™](#).*

At the time of this report, 64 of 74 investigations were completed while the remaining 10 were ongoing. Of the 64 completed investigations, 28 (44%) allegations were substantiated and resulted in fifteen (15) employment/contract terminations, and twelve (12) other disciplinary measures, including but not limited to verbal and written warnings. One (1) case was addressed through corrective action (training and coaching). The outcomes of the remaining investigations (36) were unsubstantiated or inconclusive, resulting in one or more corrective actions to strengthen safeguarding knowledge and address behaviors.

The above numbers represent an increase in safeguarding reports; in 2020, CRS received just 66 reports of potential safeguarding policy violations. Consistent with industry trends, CRS expects a continued rise in reports as staff, partners, suppliers, and project participants become more aware of CRS’ safeguarding policy and channels through which they can report violations and concerns. CRS has already, and will continue to, strengthen its capacity to investigate and respond to safeguarding reports.

## Continued Strategic Investments

In FY21, CRS continued to build upon its strategic investments in priority areas identified as critical to operationalizing the Safeguarding Policy. This included training Safeguarding Focal Points in country programs across the globe to safely receive safeguarding reports and strengthen staff awareness of the Safeguarding Policy. In addition, CRS engaged in a consultative process to develop minimum safeguarding standards and training materials for implementing partners. CRS will continue its efforts to prevent harassment, abuse, and exploitation in FY22 by continuing to invest in bolstering safeguards within its programs and operating systems.