Safeguarding Policy Version 3

Introduction

Purpose of the Policy

As one of the six regional associations of World Rugby, Rugby Africa assembles the African nations that practise 15s and 7s rugby. Rugby Africa is committed to ensuring that all individuals participating in its activities, programs, and events are protected from harassment and abuse. This Safeguarding Policy outlines the Rugby Africa's approach to creating a safe and inclusive environment for all participants, particularly children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Scope and Application

This policy applies to all persons (covered persons) involved in the Rugby Africa's operations, including but not limited to:

- Executive and administrative staff
- Member Unions
- Coaches, referees, officials, volunteers, and technical staff
- Players and participants
- Contractors, event personnel, spectators at events, consultants, and service providers

The policy covers conduct not only in person but also in virtual environments.

It shall be the responsibility of every covered person to make himself or herself aware of and to comply with this policy.

Policy Statement

Rugby Africa affirms that the welfare, dignity and rights of all participants are paramount. Every individual has the right to participate in rugby in a safe, inclusive and respectful environment, free from harassment, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination.

Rugby Africa recognises that children are particularly vulnerable and therefore require special protection. The organisation accepts its heightened responsibility to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of all children involved in the game and will take all reasonable and proportionate measures to prevent harm, respond effectively to concerns, and uphold the rights and best interests of every child.

Definitions

- Safe Rugby: A physically and psychologically safe and supportive rugby environment where participants can thrive and experience the full benefits of participation in the sport.
- Safeguarding in Rugby: All protective measures to both prevent and appropriately respond to concerns related to harassment and abuse as well as the promotion of holistic approaches to player welfare.
- Child: Any person under the age of 18 years.
- Vulnerable adult: A person aged 18 or older who, by reason of disability, age, illness, or circumstances, may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.
- Inter-Personal Violence or Abuse: Harassment and abuse can be based on any grounds including race, religion, colour, creed, ethnic origin, physical attributes, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, socio-economic status, and athletic ability. It can include a one-off incident or a series of incidents. It may be in person or online. Harassment may be deliberate, unsolicited, and coercive. Harassment and abuse often result from an abuse of authority, meaning the improper use of a position of influence, power, or authority by an individual against another person.

The means and methods by which harassment and abuse are carried out include - contact, non-contact, verbal and via electronic communications. It may involve deliberate acts, as well as failure to act and omissions, or may take different forms including grooming, trafficking, financial abuse or hazing which are defined

A detailed list of definitions of harassment and abuse can be found in Rugby Africa's Safeguarding Toolkit.

Legal and Ethical Framework

Rugby Africa operates under a framework consistent with:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- The Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa
- African Union Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy
- The Olympic Charter and the IOC Safeguarding Framework
- World Rugby's Safeguarding Policy
- Relevant continental and national legislation governing child protection, data protection, and human rights
- Good practice guidelines from international sport and child protection agencies

Each Member Union is expected to align its safeguarding policy and procedures with this policy while respecting national legal requirements.

Roles and Responsibilities

Rugby Africa Executive Committee

- Endorse and oversee implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Allocate sufficient resources to safeguarding initiatives.
- Appoint a designated Safeguarding Manager and a Safeguarding Case Management Group

Rugby Africa Safeguarding Committee

- Develop a strategy for safeguarding in rugby in Africa.
- Implement safeguarding initiatives and campaigns within rugby in Africa.
- Collaborate with World Rugby and other organisations in the promotion of safeguarding in rugby in Africa.
- Implement safeguarding measures at tournaments organised by Rugby Africa.

Rugby Africa Safeguarding Manager

- Act as the designated lead for safeguarding matters.
- Receive and manage reports of safeguarding concerns.
- Liaise with law enforcement, social services, and Member Union safeguarding officers.
- Maintain confidential safeguarding records in line with relevant data protection legislation.

Rugby Africa Safeguarding Case Management Group

- Manages safeguarding cases in accordance with Rugby Africa's Procedures for Safeguarding Case Management.
- Appoints members to the Safeguarding Investigative Panel which determines interim safeguarding orders, investigations and charges.
- Appoints members to the Safeguarding Adjudication Panel which considers investigation reports and charges and makes determinations and safeguarding orders.

Member Unions

- Implement this policy within their jurisdiction.
- Endorse and oversee implementation of a National Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Appoint National Safeguarding Officer(s).
- Allocate sufficient resources to safeguarding initiatives.
- Ensure local training and awareness programs are conducted.
- Ensure staff and volunteers are vetted as being suitable to work with children or vulnerable adults.
- Establish national procedures for reporting and managing safeguarding concerns.

Coaches, Referees, Officials, and Staff

- Adhere to the Code of Conduct.
- Report any safeguarding concerns immediately.
- Promote a culture of respect and inclusion.

Players and Participants

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Report any form of harassment or abuse.

Safeguarding Principles

Protection – Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Prevention – Proactive steps will be taken to identify and reduce safeguarding risks.

Partnership – Rugby Africa will collaborate with member unions, governments, and other organisations to safeguard participants in the sport.

Participation – The voices of players, including survivors of harassment and abuse, and children and young people, will be heard in decision-making.

Person Centred - Places the individual's rights, best interests, dignity and safety at the heart of all decisions, actively seeks and respects their views, wishes, culture and beliefs, and ensures they are appropriately supported to participate in decisions affecting them.

Accountability – All safeguarding concerns will be handled fairly, transparently, and consistently.

Recognising Abuse and Misconduct

Harassment and abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Physical abuse: Deliberate physical harm or injury.
- Psychological (Emotional) abuse: Persistent criticism, humiliation, or verbal assault.
- Sexual abuse: Any sexual act without consent or with a child.
- Sexual Harassment: Unacceptable and unwelcome behaviour and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to, sexual suggestions or demands, requests for sexual favours and sexual, verbal or physical conduct or gestures, that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating.
- Neglect: Failure to provide adequate care, supervision, or support.
- Bullying and harassment: Repeated aggressive or intimidating behaviour.
- Financial Exploitation: The misappropriation of financial resources or abusive use of financial control, in the context of a relationship where there is an expectation of trust.
- Human Trafficking: Where people are recruited, moved, or transported and then exploited, forced to work, or sold. Trafficking through sport is common and is usually associated with financial abuse.
- Hazing: Any intentional, coercive, humiliating, degrading, abusive, or potentially dangerous activity—whether physical, psychological, or sexual—that is imposed on an individual as a condition of joining, remaining in, or being accepted by a team, group, or organisation, regardless of the individual's perceived consent.
- Online abuse: Exploitation or harassment through digital platforms.

A detailed list of definitions of harassment and abuse is set out in Rugby Africa's Safeguarding Toolkit together with guidance on how to recognise and respond to signs of harassment or abuse. All covered persons must be vigilant and aware of signs of distress, withdrawal, unexplained injuries, or behavioural changes.

Safeguarding Procedures

Procedures for Safeguarding Case Management.

Safeguarding concerns are managed in accordance with Rugby Africa's Procedures for Safeguarding Case Management**.**

Rugby Africa's Procedures for Safeguarding Case Management are implemented by Rugby Africa's Safeguarding Manager and Safeguarding Case Management Group. These procedures operate independently of Rugby Africa's Executive Committee and Senior Management in order to ensure that safeguarding matters are managed fairly, transparently, and consistently.

Rugby Africa's Executive Committee is responsible for ensuring that decisions of the Safeguarding Case Management Group or the Judicial and Disciplinary Committee Appeals Panel are implemented.

Reporting Concerns

Safeguarding concerns can be reported to Rugby Africa or its Member Unions through their reporting channels. Rugby Africa will publish on its website the different channels for reporting concerns.

Safeguarding concerns reported to Rugby Africa will be as far as reasonably possible acknowledged within 24 hours and will be managed in accordance with Rugby Africa's Procedures for Safeguarding Case Management**.**

Safeguarding concerns in rugby may be reported anonymously where the reporting person has fears, concerns, or reservations about identifying themselves.

Jurisdiction

Rugby Africa will assume jurisdiction over a safeguarding case where:

- A Member Union which has a policy and procedures for safeguarding participants, does not, in the opinion of Rugby Africa, safeguard such participant (e.g. by not taking any disciplinary action)
- A Member Union does not have a policy and procedures for safeguarding participants
- The safeguarding concern arises during a Rugby Africa Tournament or Activity.

Safeguarding concerns which do not fall within the jurisdiction of Rugby Africa will be referred to the appropriate Member Union or another authority.

Cross-Border Jurisdiction and Recognition

Rugby Africa shall retain jurisdiction to investigate and adjudicate any alleged breach of its safeguarding policy or codes of conduct arising from conduct occurring within its authority, competitions, programmes, or activities, regardless of whether the Respondent subsequently relocates, resigns, deregisters, or ceases involvement within the original Member Union.

Jurisdiction shall not be defeated by a change of residence, nationality, registration status, or affiliation to another Member Union. Safeguarding accountability follows the individual across all Rugby Africa jurisdictions.

Member Unions shall promptly notify Rugby Africa of any serious safeguarding allegation, investigation, provisional measure, or sanction involving a Participant who seeks to transfer to, register with, or participate in activities under another Member Union.

Where an individual is under investigation for an alleged safeguarding breach, Rugby Africa may impose provisional suspension or participation restrictions pending determination of the matter. Such measures shall be recognised and enforced by all Member Unions.

Any safeguarding sanction imposed by Rugby Africa or a Member Union in accordance with due process shall be recognised and enforced by all Member Unions within the Rugby Africa jurisdiction.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Any information pertaining to an alleged incident of harassment and abuse shall be regarded as highly confidential and may only be disclosed in accordance with Rugby Africa's Procedures for Safeguarding Case Management**.**

Whistleblower Protection

Although safeguarding concerns can be reported directly by an affected individual, the term "whistle blowing" is used to describe a concern relating to the conduct of an individual made by someone other than the affected person.

Rugby Africa recognises that some individuals may be fearful of the consequences of making a concern under the Procedures for Safeguarding Case Management, particularly where the alleged perpetrator is in a position of authority. In these circumstances, where possible, the identity of the whistle blower will remain confidential.

Any person who reports a concern in good faith must not be subject to reprisal or other adverse consequences. Rugby Africa and Member Unions will ensure no individual faces retaliation for reporting concerns.

These protections shall not apply to a person who intentionally makes a concern that is false, vexatious, retaliatory, or frivolous.

Support and Welfare

Rugby Africa will ensure that victims and whistleblowers are supported through the case management process via confidential counselling and/or referral services.

Support will be extended to individuals accused, ensuring fairness during investigations.

Safeguarding Guidance

Rugby Africa will publish a safeguarding toolkit to support staff, Member Unions and other stakeholders to implement protections against harassment and abuse in the sport. The toolkit shall provide resources, templates, practical advice and direction to enable participants to implement the safeguarding policy. This guidance shall act as a roadmap for turning the Rugby Africa safeguarding policy into practice. The toolkit will provide advice on a range of safeguarding measures including but not limited to:

- Codes of Conduct.
- How to undertake risk assessments.
- Embedding vetting or police checks into recruitment.
- The type and required safeguarding in sport training for different stakeholders.
- How to use social media safely.
- How to ensure safe overnight stays and competitions.
- How to develop risk registers and risk management plans.

Education and Awareness

Rugby Africa will provide safeguarding education and training through World Rugby's online courses created in partnership with the International Safeguards for Children in Sport.

Rugby Africa will ensure that all coaches and officials receive safeguarding training as a component of certification programmes.

Rugby Africa and its Member Unions will conduct from time to time safeguarding workshops for different stakeholders.

Rugby Africa and its Member Unions will conduct communication campaigns promoting respect, inclusion, and safety in sport.

Monitoring and Compliance

Rugby Africa shall conduct annual safeguarding audits will assess compliance among member unions. Non-compliance may result in sanctions, suspension, or withdrawal of affiliation.

Rugby Africa shall produce an annual Safeguarding Report will be presented to the Executive Committee.

Any information relating to concerns of harassment and abuse will be stored securely and in accordance with relevant Data Protection legislation.

Any information about poor practice or concerns about harassment and violence that may indicate that a participant in a position of trust is unsuitable to work or volunteer in Rugby will

be retained for as long as the participant remains active in the sport or for ten (10) years, whichever is longer, even if it were not possible at the time that the information was first reported to instigate any formal proceedings.

Any other records relating to other concerns will be retained for a period of five (5) years unless a similar concern arises within that period.

Any records relating to disciplinary action taken by Rugby Africa will be retained for a period of five (5) years after the sanction has lapsed.

Policy Implementation and Review

This policy shall be implemented within six (6) months of its approval.

The Rugby Africa Safeguarding Manager will monitor progress and prepare annual implementation reports.

The policy will be reviewed every two (2) years or sooner if required by changes in law or best practice.

Adoption

This policy was adopted at Rugby Africa's Executive Committee meeting on 27 February 2026 and presented to the Rugby Africa General Assembly on 27 February 2026.

Signed: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____