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Rural Poultry Centre Human Resources Manual*

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Purpose of this Manual

The purpose of this manual is to inform new employees of the policies and procedures of the Rural Poultry Centre in Malawi. It will clarify what the organisation expects of a new employee and will strengthen the new employee's understanding of how we work and what is expected. Every employee and staff member of RPC will be provided with a copy of this Manual and should familiarise him/herself with the contents.

RPC reserves the right to update, revise or suspend the manual at its sole discretion. The manual supersedes and replaces any and all personnel manuals previously made available or applicable to RPC employees.

Disclaimer

At the outset, we must clarify that this manual is a guide and should in no way be construed as a contract. It refers to other documents and/or policies which may or may not be of a contractual nature but the manual itself does not imply any binding undertaking.

Some Terms

We, us, etc	The Board of Trustees and the Director of the Rural Poultry Centre in Malawi.
RPC	The Rural Poultry Centre, an NGO duly incorporated and registered in Malawi under the name "Registered Trustees of Rural Poultry Centre".
Personnel	Includes employees, contractors, volunteers, interns, Board members, and any other associates of RPC to whom a benefit accrues.

Overview of the Rural Poultry Centre in Malawi

The **vision** of RPC is

- Improved livelihoods amongst resource poor and vulnerable families.

The **mission** of RPC is

- To sustainably improve rural livelihoods through interventions encompassing poultry.

Its **goals** are:

- To empower, educate and motivate individuals and communities;
- To contribute to socio-economic development of resource poor families;
- To advance village poultry health and production;
- To prevent and control diseases of poultry;
- To act as an information centre on rural poultry.

Employment Policies

As a matter of principle, RPC strives to provide a work environment which is conducive to a cooperative team atmosphere, where mutual respect, cohesion, cooperation and collaboration prevail. To this end, RPC is supportive in its dealings with employees and contractors, and seeks to minimise the risk of negative or harmful work relations.

The employment policies of RPC are first and foremost in compliance with applicable law in Malawi. Subject to this, employment policies may where necessary be subject to various legal or administrative requirements imposed by donor organisations or other countries.

Comprehensive conditions of employment are to be found in a document of a title such as "Job terms and conditions" which is prepared by RPC to clarify and specify the terms and conditions of employment specifically for the category of the job position in question. Every employee should receive and keep a copy of the job terms and conditions applicable to his/her position.

Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Statement

The Rural Poultry Centre adopts a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of:

- gender
- disability
- religious beliefs
- colour, race, origin or other protected status.

The Rural Poultry Centre in Malawi is committed to providing equal employment opportunity without regard to such status with respect to recruitment, hiring, upgrades, training, promotion, and other terms and conditions of employment. This policy complies with applicable laws of Malawi governing non-discrimination in employment.

RPC values people from diverse backgrounds, working to create an open atmosphere of trust, honesty and respect. Harassment or discrimination of any kind - including that involving origin, race, color, religion, gender, age, nationality, citizenship, disabilities, veteran status, or any other similarly protected status - is unacceptable. This principle applies to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, hiring, placement, transfer, promotion, layoff, recall, termination and other terms and conditions of employment.

General Employment Information

Recruitment

RPC recognises the importance of employing the most suitable applicant for all vacant positions. Our policy is to appoint employees fully able to undertake the tasks and responsibilities associated with the position in question. We adopt a robust and professional approach to recruitment and selection to help us attract and appoint individuals with the necessary skills and attributes to fulfil our aims and support our goals. All appointments are made on the basis of merit, compliance with all relevant legislation and adherence to this procedure and related processes.

Child protection policy: As part of the obligations implied by RPC's Child Protection Policy, all recruitment processes will include a risk assessment to reduce the risk of any child being harmed as a result of RPC operations or activities. In all cases of possible contact with children, a prior criminal record check of the candidate will be a mandatory prerequisite before engagement.

Positions advertised are accompanied by:

1. a job description covering key activities and tasks, required skills, experience and qualifications, expectations and deliverables;
2. a statement of selection criteria.

We appoint a selection panel which short lists applicants and conducts interviews if required. We may on occasions make appointments without resorting to advertisements or interviews where we are satisfied the candidate fully satisfies the requirements of the position. We check references and certificates to ensure the veracity of information provided.

The selected applicant is notified and a written offer and/or Contract of Employment is prepared, setting out the terms and conditions of employment. The Contract confirms the start date, salary (if any), position and the terms and conditions of employment pertaining to the employee.

Unsuccessful applicants are informed once the offer has been accepted by the selected applicant.

Induction

RPC is committed to properly inducting all new employees, volunteers and contractors into the organisation, in order to ensure that they feel welcome and are ready to start work safely and competently.

A nominated RPC supervisor/manager should take time with each new employee to ensure that they can achieve a smooth start in their new work environment. The supervisor will provide copies of the latest available versions of the following documents with appropriate explanation:

- RPC Human Relations Manual (this document, which notably includes the mission, goals and operations of RPC)
- RPC Code of Conduct
- RPC Strategic Plan and Organisational Structure
- RPC Communications policy
- RPC Financial Procedures Manual and related documents (for relevant positions)
- Policy on use of RPC vehicles (for relevant positions)
- Other relevant policies (some may not yet be developed)

The supervisor will:

- give a complete verbal briefing to enlarge upon the new employee's understanding of the organisation, its values and its operations
- clarify the relationship between the new employee's position and other positions within RPC
- introduce the new employee to all relevant colleagues and personnel
- conduct a tour of the office and relevant surroundings.

Professional and Personal Development

RPC encourages its personnel to improve their technical and professional skills in areas relevant to the mission and values of the organisation. Personal and professional development is integral to personal job satisfaction, workplace productivity, reward, and recognition, and is important for the achievement of RPC's mission and continuous improvement in the quality of its programs. RPC is therefore, as far as is feasible within its available resources, committed to providing personnel with the opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and attributes, and to participate in career development activities, that complement operational and institutional goals. RPC will strive to maintain equity in the provision of such facilitation between employees.

Mechanisms by which RPC may achieve such ends include:

- Flexibility in the application of work hour specifications and/or leave arrangements to facilitate study
- Granting of study leave as necessary to attend examinations
- Assistance with references and work history statements
- Financial support for demonstrable costs of study or development programs where funding can be found

Employees are encouraged to take an active role in their own ongoing professional and career development and to apply their learning to its most effective use. Any proposal by an employee for support from RPC via the above or other mechanisms should be subject to transparent discussion between the employee and RPC management. Any agreement will be fully documented in that employee's personnel file.

Standards of Conduct

RPC commits itself to adherence to high ethical standards for all personnel. Its standards of conduct are contained in the RPC Code of Conduct, a separate document which is provided to all personnel and associates. The Code provides guidelines and standards on:

- Personal conduct and mutual respect
- Conflict of interests
- Proprietary rights and access to data
- Use of RPC assets, equipment and resources
- Gifts and benefits from outside RPC
- Child protection
- Fraud and anti-corruption
- Bullying and harassment in the workplace
- Discipline and Termination Policies

All personnel of RPC are expected to be familiar with the Code of Conduct and to adhere to its principles at all times.

Whistle-blower Protection

RPC is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical behaviour and integrity. Employees are expected to cooperate in maintaining legal, proper, and ethical operations, if necessary by reporting non-compliant actions by other people. Employees who do assist in maintaining legal, proper, and ethical operations should not be penalised in any way.

A whistle-blower is a person (being a director, manager, employee or contractor of RPC) who, whether anonymously or not, makes, attempts to make or wishes to make a report in connection with reportable conduct and wishes to avail themselves of protection against reprisal for having made the report.

Breaches of general law, organisational policy, or generally recognised principles of ethics include:

- corrupt conduct
- fraud or theft
- official misconduct
- maladministration
- harassment or unlawful discrimination
- serious and substantial waste of RPC or public resources
- practices endangering the health or safety of the personnel, volunteers, or the general public
- practices endangering the environment.

RPC encourage the reporting of matters that may cause harm to individuals or damage the reputation of the organisation. RPC will deal with reports from whistle-blowers in a way that will protect the identity of the whistle-blower and provide for the secure storage of the information provided. It will strive to protect the whistle-blower against reprisal by any person, internal or external.

Where an employee of RPC believes in good faith on reasonable grounds that any other employee, volunteer, or contractor has breached any provision of the general law that employee must report their concern to their supervisor or, if they feel that their supervisor may be complicit in the breach, the Director or, if they feel that the Director may be complicit in the breach, the Board Chair of RPC.

The person making their concern known will not suffer any sanctions from RPC on account of their actions in this regard, provided that their actions are in good faith, and are based on reasonable grounds, and conform to the designated procedures.

Any person within RPC to whom such a disclosure is made will:

- if they believe the behaviour complained of to be unquestionably trivial or fanciful, dismiss the allegation and notify the person making the allegation of their decision; or
- if they believe the behaviour complained of to be neither trivial nor fanciful, ensure that the allegation is investigated, a finding is made, and the person making the allegation is informed of the finding.

Any such investigation will observe the rules of natural justice and the provisions of procedural fairness. Disclosures may be made anonymously, and this anonymity will as far as possible be preserved by RPC.

Work and Pay Schedule and Employee Benefits

The initial pay schedule for RPC employees is included in the Contract of Employment. In some cases, annual review of the conditions is undertaken subject to the funding arrangements of the position in question. Usually, such review will take place before the beginning of the new financial year on 1 July.

The Contract of Employment should always include specification of (initial) salary, allowances, duration of employment and leave arrangements. Depending on the nature of the position and funding arrangements, it may include other relevant conditions of employment such as health insurance, termination benefits, dress code, promotion opportunities, and overtime, if these are applicable.

Health and Safety

RPC will, as far as practicable, provide a safe work environment for the health, safety and welfare of our personnel, visitors and members of the public who may be affected by our work. All employees, contractors, volunteers and interns working with RPC are expected to follow standards of safety and health protection which are consistent with applicable legal standards and appropriate for the task at hand. They are expected to adhere to all relevant guidelines and/or instructions regarding health and safety and to report through their supervisor on any conflicts or impediments which threaten the integrity of the health/safety aspects of their work.

Discipline and Termination Policies

Where a member of RPC's personnel is found to have failed to meet the requirements and expectations of the organisation, RPC will take action appropriate to the seriousness of the case. In all cases, RPC will abide by the applicable legislation and follow due process. The principles of natural justice will be followed via enabling the accused person to respond to any accusations of impropriety.

Action taken may include but not be limited to the following:

- Issuance of a warning letter outlining the nature problem, the future behaviour expected of the member, and the likely repercussions of any repeat of misbehaviour.
- Deductions from salary or contractual provisions to compensate for financial loss.
- Suspension of employment/engagement or re-assignment of duties under specified conditions.
- Termination of employment/engagement.

Misbehaviour which is serious enough to warrant termination of employment/engagement includes but is not limited to any criminal offence.

Acknowledgement Form:

This acknowledgement form must be signed by the employee, detached from the body of the Manual and kept on the RPC personnel file for the employee.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Rural Poultry Centre's Human Resources Manual and that I have read and understood the document. I have an understanding of the organisation, its policies and the prescribed standards of conduct sufficient to enable me to meet the expectations of RPC for the position I have been assigned.

Full Name	
Signature	
Date	
Position	
Supervisor/manager	