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| **POLICY NAME:** Learning Policy | **CATEGORY:** Programme, Operations and HR |
| **APPROVED BY:** SAC | **APPROVED:** September 2022 |
| **POLICY OWNER:** Co-Directors | **NEXT REVIEW:** September 2025 |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

World Renew recognises that poverty, injustice, and disaster are all part of the complex systems in our world. Therefore, World Renew seeks to understand and change systems.  And World Renew is itself a system in which each part needs to function well in order to meet our goals. Learning is an essential requirement for the World Renew system to function, and for us to understand and change the systems that produce poverty, injustice, and vulnerability to disasters.

World Renew defines learning as acquiring knowledge, attitudes and values; adopting new behaviours and/or developing skills that result in improved programming and sustainable results at community level. Learning includes finding evidence to appreciate what is good and then acting to preserve it; it also includes identifying what is harmful and changing it. Change can be on three levels: using new tools (technological), practicing new habits (behavioural), or accepting different beliefs and values (cultural) and structural.

Innovation and continual learning are normative in World Renew to ensure that our community/ international development and disaster response work is effective and sustainable. World Renew values local and traditional knowledge that already exists in the communities where we serve,while bringing in new perspectives, hence we collaborate as co-learners with the communities. We make way for local leadership and community members to have ownership and be frontline doers of their development work, and to use the action and reflection cycle to improve our work in partnership.

Sustainable development requires amongst other principles adequate contextual training of languages, cultures, customs, beliefs systems, and values as a means to not perpetuate neo-colonialism and/or westernization within globalization.

Learning has a number of spiritual aspects that connect to World Renew's value of Faith. We need a transformed mind in order to learn what God's will is, and to discern our way forward: Learning requires a posture of humility, to admit that we don't know everything; a desire for knowledge, and a welcoming of feedback, both positive and negative. (Romans 12:2).

In addition, World Renew is committed to applying the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) and remains guided by  the principles of community development of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action across all its work.  The CHS Commitments include ensuring that "Communities and

people affected by crisis, poverty and injustice can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection." This policy seeks to formalise World Renew's commitment to ongoing learning and improvement.

## 2. SCOPE

This learning policy applies to all World Renew departments, programmes, and personnel, including internal operations and work with implementing partners, networks, and alliances. This includes the human resources functions of employee orientation and professional development, the work of World Renew staff who engage with our implementing partners in mutual learning, and the work of World Renew staff who participate in external networks and alliances.

## 3. PURPOSE

This policy seeks to ensure that our commitment to learning and to sharing information will be carried out effectively and responsibly. This policy promotes the dual goals of strengthening staff capacity and organisational learning.

## 4. PRINCIPLES

a) Learning is **impact-oriented** for the benefit of the work carried out by World Renew. Learning is to meet the ends of the focused programme work of World Renew to carry out our mission.

b) Learning is *deliberate*. We learn to improve our results for our mission and to achieve organisational priorities. Learning is *part of our programme plans and individual work plans and related to our core responsibilities*. We make *time, staffing and budget available* for learning, including it in our planning and budgeting processes. We innovate, but we *experiment with pilot projects* before scaling up so that we do not harm participants, we avoid wasting World Renew's resources, and provide ourselves with an opportunity to learn, strengthen and correct the approaches/methodology before using them at a larger scale. Staff have the *orientation, onboarding and training* necessary to fulfill their job expectations. As there are far more good learning resources than staff can take advantage of, *learning is prioritised and resources are curated* by internal subject matter experts who provide the right training resource for what is needed.

c) Learning is *continuous*. The *cycle of reflection and action* should be applied in all of World Renew's work to improve our programs, policies, processes, and structures. We *evaluate* all of our programs, operations and systems, and we use the results to continue improving. In humility, we learn from our failures and *welcome feedback and complaints*, using them as learning opportunities.

d) We use *positive* approaches and we are *learner-centered*. The learner (staff, partner, community) is primary in guiding their own development. We use *participatory learning approaches, building on the assets* they already possess. We include *appreciative* methods to identify what is valuable and needs to be preserved. We avoid emotional reactions of defensiveness and blaming or shaming because we remember that getting information empowers us.

e) Learning is *contextual*. We live this out by tending to the different cultural, religious, political and geographical contexts, experiences and needs of each staff in our learning. Because we work with social systems that are complex, we practice *systems thinking*, use *data and triangulation* to inform our decisions, and *evidence-based practices*. In complexity, we practice *Participatory Learning & Action* - employing participatory action research (human-centered design) techniques: learning from those we serve, designing with them iterative learning solutions or *innovations* that fit the context and need.

f) Learning is *coordinated*. We *coordinate our training initiatives* across the organization to avoid redundant, siloed efforts and overwhelming staff - recognizing that people can only integrate limited amounts of learning in their work at one time. We provide a means for *sharing learning* from successes and failures, that is applicable to other team members, teams, the organisation as a whole, and our partners and networks.  We practice *peer-to-peer or social learning* to make meaning from our experiences together.  We practice *mutual learning* with our partners - learning from and with them, and helping connect them to global learning resources.

g) Learning strengthens *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*: We will make reasonable accommodations and adjustments to the learning needs of different staff/partners, while also ensuring learning resources are equitably distributed.


## 5. POLICY

### 5.1  Employee Learning

5.1.1 World Renew will ensure that all staff are provided sufficient orientation, so as to be enabled to effectively perform their work.  Orientation for new staff will include, but will not be limited to:
- Organisational Systems
- Structure and programmatic thematic areas
- Values
- Mission
- Strategic Plan
- Policies

5.1.2 Supervisors will ensure that staff are supported with development planning necessary

for them to be effective in their roles (meet professional capabilities or core competency expectations), as supported by the Onboarding to Mastery Programme.

5.1.3 Staff are required to participate in organisational orientation and complete the onboarding plan determined for their position by their supervisors.

5.1.4. Individual employees, with the agreement of their supervisor, are responsible for determining annual learning goals and long-term development plans, and for progressing on the learning necessary to be successful in their roles. They will be evaluated annually in their performance review on progress against these goals.

5.1.5 Supervisors will be evaluated annually in their performance review on their support for their direct reports' learning.

5.1.6 An employee who is concerned that their learning is not being supported according to this policy should first talk to their supervisor, and if they are not satisfied, they should submit their feedback to Human Resources.

## 5.2  Programme Learning

### 5.2.1   Programme Design and Learning

5.2.1.1 World Renew will draw on lessons learnt and prior experience from a range of sources when designing projects and programmes.

5.2.1.2 World Renew's knowledge management system will enable staff to access documented learning to inform project and programme design.

5.2.1.3 Staff with relevant prior experience will support the development and review of project and programme designs.

5.2.1.4 Participatory approaches to programme development will enable the prior experience of partners and communities to inform project and programme design.

5.2.1.5 Resources to enable learning processes to take place at the programme level, including financial resources and staff time, will be included in the design of project and programme activities and budgets.

### 5.2.2   Learning from Programme Monitoring and Evaluation

5.2.2.1 Regular monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) processes will be incorporated into all programmes to enable staff to identify key programmatic learnings in real time.

5.2.2.2 Results of monitoring and evaluation processes will be reviewed by programme staff and shared with communities and stakeholders affected by the project in order to make relevant adjustments to programmes based on the learning.

### 5.2.3 Evaluation Standards

5.2.3.1 Regular evaluations will be required of all implementing partnerships (evaluating the programme, partner, and WR's role in the partnership) and of all home office departments (DRS, IDR, PE, Finance, HR, CORE teams, and other operations departments) as well as strategic plan. These will normally be every third year, but this timing can be modified according to programme needs and staff workload.

5.2.3.2 While monitoring is considered an internal activity, evaluations should consider the use of external perspectives as a matter of good practice.

5.2.3.3 World Renew will fulfill the evaluation requirements for all grant agreements. For the sake of efficiency, a partnership evaluation may be held at the same time as an end-of-project evaluation and the evaluation report may be combined.

5.2.3.4 World Renew evaluations will be done according to industry standards as stated in World Renew's Evaluation Guidance and Toolkit document.

### 5.2.4 Learning from Feedback and Complaints

5.2.4.1 Programme and project level mechanisms to welcome feedback and complaints will be established in line with World Renew's Complaints Policy and Complaints Handling and Investigation guidelines.

5.2.4.2 Project and programme related feedback will be referred to relevant project and programme staff to take appropriate action.  This includes making adjustments and implementing changes to the project and programme implementation if necessary.

5.2.4.3  Programme level feedback and complaints will be reviewed regularly by Senior Leadership to identify any general programme level learning that can be fed into future programme and project implementation and design at the local, country or global level.

### 5.2.5 Learning from Innovation and Experimentation

5.2.5.1 To avoid doing harm in communities, innovations will be tested by means of low-risk pilot projects, with feedback and evaluation by the participants and other stakeholders.

5.2.5.2 World Renew will share the learnings of the pilot projects in a targeted way with staff and partners working in similar contexts through various platforms and tools (e.g. communities of practice, workshops, tools, case studies).

### 5.2.6 Learning in Networks and Accessing Technical Expertise

5.2.6.1 World Renew will identify and resource the key networks, alliances, and professional associations which are value-added to the organisation and to which we can add value in the sharing of learning. These will be reviewed by the Co-directors every 3 years to ensure that we are investing wisely in external relationships.

5.2.6.2 External technical expertise for programme support may be provided at the country, regional, or international level depending on the assessment of needs and availability. Team leaders will coordinate any decisions for determining needs and contracting for technical expertise for programs.

## 5.3  Organisational Development

5.3.1 World Renew will do regular system and operational evaluations and audits according to the basic standards noted in 5.2.3, and document evaluation reports and follow-up in a knowledge management system, both for programmes and for home office functions

5.3.2 World Renew will evaluate performance against the strategic plan, at minimum, at the conclusion of the period covered by the Strategic Plan.

5.3.3 World Renew will organise and manage information, knowledge and learning resources so that our staff and implementing partners can find information that they need when they need it, it will also ensure that key learning is shared publicly to support development within the broader sector.

## 6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years and revised to incorporate any lessons learned during implementation or significant changes in context.

## 7. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS[1]

*Community Development:* is a practice-based profession that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities. It is a process that brings community members together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems in order to create stronger and

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1          World Renew commits to complying with its applicable statutory and legislative obligations. Accordingly, the specific definitions, terms or concepts used in this policy are for reference purposes only. If necessary, the applicable provincial or federal definitions mandated by the appropriate jurisdiction where an employee is employed, will take precedence and/or will supersede the definitions outlined in this policy.

resilient communities, whether, rural, or urban.

*Evaluation:*  An activity that includes identifying stakeholders, agreeing on Terms of Reference, setting up an evaluation team, gathering and assessing information from various sources, developing conclusions and recommendations, presenting them to the department that was evaluated, and making a written report.

*Innovation:*  The introduction of a new idea, method or approach that could lead to significant improvement. It could be an old or proven idea or practice in one region that is seen as novel to others in another area or context. It can refer to a unique organisational model, operational process, or services that could lead to substantial advances. In a social context, it could mean new collaborative techniques such as alliance formation (e.g. public-private partnership), joint venturing, or generating buyers' purchasing power.

*Learner-centered:*  Learner-centered psychological principles emphasize the active and reflective nature of learning; they promote interaction between learners, and allow the earners to make decisions about what content they will learn.

*Onboarding to Mastery Programme:*  An internal World Renew System supporting the onboarding and development of staff involved in community and organizational development program consultation, to help them achieve and maintain core competencies and move to mastery as Community and Organisational Development practitioners, technical specialists, and/or leaders.

*Organisational Development:*  Are efforts that focus on improving an organisation's capabilities through alignment of strategy, structure, management processes, people, rewards, and metrics. Organisational culture encompasses culture, its norms, hierarchies, power dynamics, the values and behaviors that contribute to the social and psychological environment of a business that inform the planning of initiatives to develop systems, structures, and processes to improve effectiveness.

*Participatory action research:*  This methodology enables researchers to work in partnership with communities to understand a problematic situation and change it for the better. Action is achieved through a reflective cycle, whereby participants collect and analyse data, then determine what action should follow. The resultant action is then further researched in a continuous cycle of data collection, reflection, and further action.

*Sustainable development:*  is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is development that keeps the interlinkages amongst environmental, societal, cultural and economic sustainability at its fore for an improved quality of life.

*Systems thinking:*  A system is a group of parts working together to accomplish goals. There are many kinds of systems; examples are the human body, an ecosystem, a family, or an organisation. Systems thinking recognizes complexity, and examines the whole rather than focusing on isolated problems. It analyses the interactions and relationships of the different parts of a system within its environment.