



Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Organization

Social Welfare & Rehabilitation Organization (SWRO)

Information Sharing Policy

Approved by Senior Management Team (SMT)
January 2019



SWRO: Principles for information and communications in order to improve transparency and accountability and minimise risk to staff and organisation.

Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Organization (SWRO) is committed to principles of accountability and transparency and we strive for open and honest communication about our activities, where and how we carry out our mission and how financial and human resources are utilised. We aim to communicate openly with the public, donors and authorities, our constituency, partners, individuals and groups that become involved and engaged.

SWRO as part of CHS principle is committed to ensuring that its staff, people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities.

The organization shall define and document processes for sharing information, covering:

1. *Commitment to accurate and timely information sharing*
2. *What information it will share with the people it seeks to assist and other stakeholders*
3. *How decisions will be made on when and how to share information*
4. *Criteria used for deciding not to share information.*

Purpose of these principles:

Staff

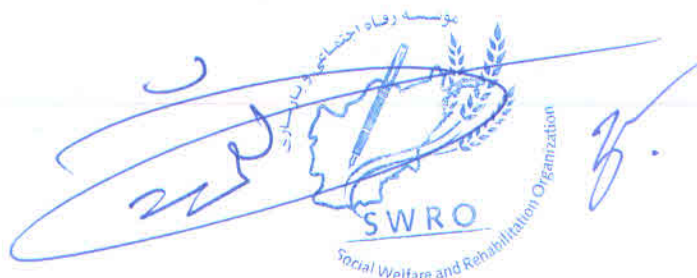
SWRO believes that greater transparency with our stakeholders will strengthen our relationship with them and help us improve what we do. The principle should be to provide all stakeholders with sufficient information so that they can understand the background, purpose, achievements and challenges of SWRO and how to engage with us. In order to live up to our commitments of accountability and transparency we need to be open about both **what** we do and **how** we do it.

We will not publish everything we produce or air legitimate confidential information. Instead our information disclosed should be guided by three questions:

- 1) What do rights-holders, host communities and other stakeholders need and want to know?
- 2) How are we able to meet their information needs?
- 3) How are we able to meet these requirements in a way that does not put unnecessary risk on staff and/or the organisation?

These principles should help us to achieve the following:

- Greater understanding of SWRO's principles and objectives.
- more open, public reporting on the outcomes and impacts of SWRO's work – successes, setbacks, ways of working and future plans
- better engagement of supporters with the issues we are working on
- better engagement with partners (and through them the people living in poverty, marginalised situations and conflict, in whose name SWRO works) increasing their understanding of SWRO, enabling us better to hold each other to account for our mutually agreed commitments, and supporting their increased participation in SWRO's decision-making processes that affect them
- clearer understanding among supporters, staff and partners as to how SWRO seeks to exercise transparency and accountability to rights-holders within its partnership approach to work and in operational projects
- A practical way of implementing our commitment to accountability through transparency ensuring that the key information listed below is always accessible.



What to inform about

What we will make public:

The fundamentals about SWRO's work in Afghanistan will be made available publicly, either on request, or directly or indirectly (by signposting) on SWRO's website and by production of an *annual* newsletter distributed to our stakeholders. Contact details will be provided telling people where they can find out more if needed. Other channels of public disclosure may also be employed. These fundamentals include:

- the basics about SWRO
- governance and management information
- organisational policies
- strategies, plans and budgets
- information on our finances and our performance¹
- mechanisms by which stakeholders can give feedback and make complaints.
- PR information and information about our campaigns

Much of this is already public. We're not talking about all information going public. Disclosure will be phased in, with a process agreed for managing its release. A process of risk assessment and exoneration may be put in place in contexts where security or access considerations may limit generic information being made available as listed above. SWRO must be aware of its target audience all written communication, ensuring that documents distributed are produced in a language recipients will understand.

We will not make public:

- Personal details of supporters, partner organisation staff and ARORSS staff unless they have given their approval to take part in campaigns etc.
- Intellectual property or other information disclosed or provided to SWRO under obligation of confidentiality or which is subject to legal disclosure restrictions
- legal advice and matters in dispute or under negotiation including disciplinary and investigative information generated in or for SWRO
- Information dealing entirely with internal administration or operating systems

In exceptional circumstances (i.e. security situations), SWRO may temporarily suspend part or all of this policy, subject to directorate approval.

Suspension of the policy will be clearly explained with reasons to affected audiences and the general public through the usual communication channels. In situations of insecurity, threat and vulnerability to the organisation, staff, SWRO may choose not to share any or selected information for a specified period. Similarly, if sharing of certain information in specific local situations will make staff and the organisation highly vulnerable, the relevant SWRO office may choose not to share the particular information for a specified period. Senior managers will need to ensure that this 'security call' is not abused.

Risks

- Misuse of information. We recognise that information can be used against us maliciously and as such we retain the right to exercise our judgement as to whether or not to disclose information if its disclosure would encourage malicious attacks.
- Costs of disclosure. We will need to consider how the potential reputational gains from disclosure eg greater stakeholder confidence and trust, greater opportunities for raising awareness, positive

¹ SWRO is committed to reporting our performance annually against clear and measurable targets that record what we have done and what difference we have made, reporting failings as well as our successes. We will commission independent evaluations of our major programmes to verify what we say.

profile and improved learning would weigh up against the costs of ensuring we live up to it, such as maintaining up-to-date information, handling enquiries it may generate, eg through the supporter relations or the media division.

- **Consistency with local legal frameworks.** We will need to pay attention to legal obligations affecting information disclosure. These may require additional disclosures or preclude disclosures.

Communication in Afghanistan

Keeping the principles of transparency in mind SWRO is aware of the specific challenges faced in Afghanistan regarding communication. These challenges can be specifically faced by organization staff amongst their family and extended family, within their community, with government and other national organisations (banks etc), and in rural communities when implementing SWRO programmes. It must be noted that working with an NGO in Afghanistan where there are marginalised communities will always be a challenge. NGOs will always have their supporters but the nature of their work will also mean they always have their spoilers. The following is a summary of the challenges that may be faced by SWRO staff with regard to this aspect of communication:

- a. Explaining to people what an NGO is and why one is working for an NGO. By extension of this, it may be difficult to explain the difference between working for an NGO and the government of Afghanistan
- b. Explaining what the meaning is of the acronym, SWRO.
- c. If one explains what each letter stands for in the acronym, difficulties can arise in explaining the work that SWRO does and subsequently having this explanation accepted and understood.
- d. Defending SWRO after deliberate false or misguided information is put in the public domain.

The following are guidelines that SWRO staff are encouraged to adapt if they feel challenged in when asked for certain explanations.

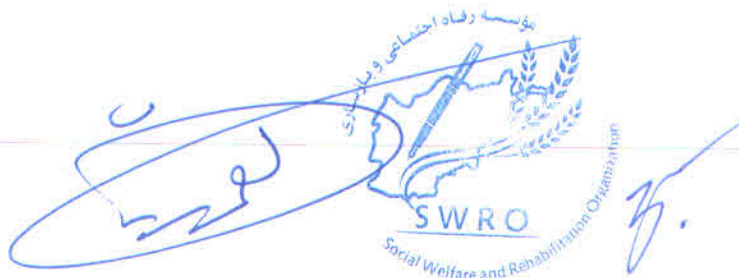
What is an NGO?

We are a national non-profit organisation that has its own principles and goals that are not set by any government. We are not part of the government of Afghanistan but instead use funds that come from the donor agencies to help those in Afghanistan that have been identified as needing our assistance. Our policy is that we will help people irrespective of culture, gender or ethnic background.

- Maintain mutual openness to constructive criticism and feedback

We are committed

- To make information public at the appropriate level the names of our NGO, main activities and a financial summary of funded programs
- make needed information available to rights-holders, host communities, partners and other stakeholders in order to secure rights-holders informed content and participation at all stages of a project and so that the partner can be held to account.
- make sure information about back donor of a project is provided along with information as to how rights-holders can contact SWRO and if needed back donor as well.



Annex 1:

Guidance on documents that are publicly available

The following SWRO documents are publicly available. They can be accessed either on the SWRO website (www.SWRO.org.af), or can be requested from the responsible department.

The basics about SWRO

Document	In what format
Our goals- Vision and Mission	Website
Strategic Plan	Website
Annual Report	Website
SWRO history	Website
Organisational structure	Website
Contact information to SWRO Management	Website
Contact information to main and field Offices	Website
Evaluation	Website
Annual Financial Statement(contained in the annual report)	Website
Donor list	Website
SWRO constituency	Website
Managements team and Board of Directors	Website
SWRO Complaints/feedback Response policy	Website

