

Independent Officer RMB | Verre Naasten¹

Contact point in case of (suspected) unacceptable behaviour

Why?

The intention of having an Independent Officer (IO) in case of (suspected) unacceptable behaviour of paid staff, volunteers or units representing RMB | Verre Naasten is to treat this seriously and to improve in the interest of all stakeholders **prevention, signalling and acting** in case of unacceptable behaviour and abuse of power. Unacceptable behaviour is unfortunately occurring worldwide. RMB | Verre Naasten is doing its utmost to avoid these kind of abuses (abuse in the area of power, money and sexual behaviour), and to improve its systems and procedures in this regard. RMB | Verre Naasten fully endorses the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief. RMB | Verre Naasten has developed this document (Independent Officer), to describe the procedure in case of (suspected) unacceptable behaviour by paid staff and/or volunteers. For our partners worldwide it describes the process to be followed in case of (suspected) abuse / unacceptable behaviour.

Procedure:

1. Prevention: RMB | Verre Naasten is aware of the disbalance that might arise between a partner worldwide and representatives of RMB | Verre Naasten f.e. because of inequality in power and resources.
2. RMB | Verre Naasten will do its utmost to have transparency part of its relationship. All colleagues and volunteers sign a code of conduct. RMB | Verre Naasten informs all colleagues and volunteers about the existence of the independent officer (IO) and about the procedure how to contact the IO.
3. RMB | Verre Naasten will actively inform partners about the existence of the IO and about the procedure how to contact the IO. RMB | Verre Naasten will place the procedure on the website (English part). RMB | Verre Naasten will point to this procedure in the agreements between RMB | Verre Naasten and its partners.
4. Signalling: If a partner / person receives signals of unacceptable behaviour by staff, volunteers or units representing RMB | Verre Naasten, he/she is sincerely invited to contact the IO that can be contacted in any case for a complaint (see contact information below). The IO is an independent person, and not an employee of RMB | Verre Naasten.
5. It is important to note that the complaint can be reported in a safe environment. This means contacting the IO has no repercussions on how RMB | Verre Naasten views the partner. The source of the information will be kept confidential. The IO will only reveal it, if necessary and only if this is agreed together with the person/partner who reports an issue.

¹ RMB | Verre Naasten are engaged in worldwide mission, on behalf of churches in The Netherlands. RMB stands for Regional Mission Boards in The Netherlands, that work on behalf of associated congregations in the Netherlands, and in cooperation with partner churches and organizations in the mission region. Verre Naasten is a professional organisation that supports the mission work.

6. Acting: The Independent Officer will treat the complaint seriously and take the following steps:
 - a. Get the picture/complaint clear by interviewing the 'reporter of the complaint'. The IO will always inquire if the partner/person tried to solve the issue with the parties/persons involved;
 - b. Investigation: If possible, the IO tries to track down both sides of the story;
 - c. The IO reports the investigation and advises to:
 - i. The chair of the National Board Mission (NMB), if the director of Verre Naasten (national supporting body for RMB's) is part of the complaint
 - ii. The director of Verre Naasten if the director is not part of the complaint
 - d. The IO will prepare a way forward to solve the issue for both parties;
 - e. The chair / director will check the procedures of RMB | Verre Naasten, whether it needs to be adjusted.
 - f. Yearly, the IO will report the number of complaints to the Management Team of Verre Naasten.
 - g. RMB | Verre Naasten reports the complaints (anonymous) in the annual report.

7. When the case is closed, the chair / director checks if the IO needs aftercare.

Independent Officer:

Marieke Blok is the current IO. In relevant cases, please don't hesitate to contact the IO by email: blokmaria67@gmail.com. She was requested to function voluntarily as IO, on the base of her spiritual matureness, Christian attitude and intercultural experience.

In the following she introduces herself:

"My name is Marieke Blok, I am married and mother of four adult children. The last 20 years I got the opportunity to work in the intercultural context of mission and development work. From 1998-2003 I lived and worked in the Democratic Republic in Congo. From 2010-2017, I worked as a trainer and consultant for several NGO's. Currently, I am a lecturer at Justo Mwale University in Lusaka (Zambia)"

