



## Child Protection Policy

Date of last revision and management approval: 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

## **Part 1: Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation in all that we do, in line with Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). All children have equal rights to protection from abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation. The welfare of children is always the most important consideration. We define a child as someone below the age of 18.

This policy is approved and endorsed by the Board of Trustees. It applies, without exception, to all staff of Childreach International: full time, part time, long and short term contractors such as researchers and consultants, international and national staff. It also applies, without exception, to all those who represent Childreach International - to be referred hereafter as representatives (this includes volunteers, trustees, members, individuals and groups involved in fundraising). Those working with Childreach International, but not part of the aforementioned, such as partner organisation members and their representatives who come into contact with children as part of the work they do for Childreach International should consult **Section 6** which addresses what we consider their obligations regarding child protection.

Childreach International has a duty of care to protect the rights of all children with whom we work and we take our duty of care extremely seriously. Childreach International is firmly committed to keeping children safe and takes a proactive approach to safeguarding children by creating safe and positive environments for children. By upholding the principles of this Child Protection Policy, we make child protection paramount at every level on which we operate.

## **Part 2: Definitions of Abuse**

Child abuse may be viewed differently across the various countries in which we operate. Whilst it is important to be sensitive at all times to the socio-cultural contexts in which we work, the safety of children is paramount. For that reason, it is advised that all those working with children through Childreach International or Childreach International's partners should be constantly vigilant for signs of abuse among the children with whom they work.

Child Abuse can be split into five different categories. Please see the definitions below:

### **Physical Abuse**

This is defined as actual or attempted physical harm or injury against a child. This can be caused intentionally or unintentionally (through failure to prevent) to a child by a person in a position of trust or responsibility or the through the actions of said person, such as beating, burning or throwing a child.

### **Sexual Abuse**

This is defined as actual or probable exploitation of a child, representing the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual acts for which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate social taboos or family rules; touching a child's genitals; forcing a child to watch or take part in pornography; or coercing the child to have sex. It is considered sexual abuse whether or not the child consents and also whether or not it is committed by a person responsible for the care of a child or related to the child. Should a stranger commit these acts it is considered sexual assault.

### **Emotional Abuse**

This is defined as the persistent and/or emotional ill treatment of a child which has a negative effect on the emotional and/or psychological development of a child. This includes belittling, social isolation, degradation, the threat of physical violence and the restriction of movement. This may involve conveying or implying to a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate; and cause a child to feel frightened, in danger and/or dirtied. It also includes actions taken in front of a child that may distress them, for example the physical abuse of a parent or loved one.

### **Neglect**

This is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and / or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of a child's physical, mental or emotional health or development. This would include, but is not limited to, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, appropriate medical care, supervision or neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Commercial or sexual exploitation of a child**

This is defined as the involvement of a child in income generating activities for another against their will or outside of their own understanding. This definition of exploitation would include all forms of child labour, child military service

and the exchange of money or other favours in return for sex and/or sexual favours. Such activities may have a negative effect on the physical, mental and emotional development of the child, often resulting in them having less access to education and may even place them in physical danger as they are asked to perform tasks unsuitable for someone at their stage of physical development.

### **Part 3: Standards for Child Protection**

Childreach International aims to protect children from abuse by setting, implementing and monitoring standards of appropriate behaviour. These standards will also protect people who come into contact with children from unfounded accusations of improper conduct.

Childreach International's Behavioural Code of Conduct clarifies what we consider to be unacceptable forms of behaviour that will result in a formal enquiry and which could lead to Childreach International's disciplinary measures being taken, or criminal proceedings. The Behavioural Code of Conduct will also give guidance on how we expect adults to behave when around children. Please see below.

## Code of Conduct

***THIS CODE IS OBLIGATORY FOR ALL REPRESENTATIVES TO FOLLOW (SEE PAGE X FOR DEFINITION OF REPRESENTATIVES).***

***Disciplinary/responsive action will be taken if any of these protocols are broken. It is the individual responsibility of all representatives to read and fully understand this protocol so that the code is not accidentally broken. Childreach International will not be held responsible if you break the code on the grounds that you were not aware of the rules, having been given the opportunity to read and understand this code. In response, Childreach International staff will remain always available to answer questions and clarify queries about this code.***

NEVER	ALWAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignore or contravene any part of the Child Protection Policy including this code</li> <li>• Fail to act if you see another representative breaking the policy including this code</li> <li>• Knowingly participate in illegal behaviour according to national, sub-national, local or cultural laws</li> <li>• Physically abuse a child. Read definitions of abuse to remind yourself of what this means (p.1).</li> <li>• Sexually abuse a child. Read definitions of abuse to remind yourself of what this means (p.1).</li> <li>• Emotionally abuse a child. Read definitions of abuse to remind yourself of what this means (p.1).</li> <li>• Neglect a child. Read definitions of abuse to remind yourself of what this means (p.1).</li> <li>• Exploit a child for commercial gain. Read definitions of abuse to remind yourself of what this means (p.1).</li> <li>• Use offensive or derogatory language or swear in front of a child</li> <li>• Behave in an aggressive manner in front of a child. This includes acting in a hostile way towards other adults.</li> <li>• Develop or encourage physical / sexual relationships with a child</li> <li>• Behave physically in a manner that could be deemed as sexually provocative</li> <li>• Contact or reply to a child via telephone, letter, email, or social media without seeking guidance from the Child Protection Officer first</li> <li>• use or be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or tobacco in front of a child</li> <li>• discriminate against a child on the basis of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion; or discriminate against an adult while in the presence of a child</li> <li>• act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, upset, humiliate or degrade a child for any purpose</li> <li>• reveal the real name of a child and their location (e.g. village name, district name) of a child to the public, including on social media posts</li> <li>• agree to participate in activities which violate the rights of a child, e.g. by taking them out of school deprives them of their right to education</li> <li>• do something that could be misinterpreted by a third party as physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect</li> <li>• invite or permit a child to enter a space in which adults sleep</li> <li>• create situations whereby children have access to valued property in order that accurate or inaccurate reports of theft do not result in the child being abused/disciplined as punishment</li> <li>• make a promise or commitment to a child under any circumstances, even if the adult making the promise truly believes it will be kept. This includes promising or distributing gifts or promising that you will be back to visit them soon.</li> <li>• pick children up, for example to put children on your shoulders.</li> <li>• gossip about an allegation or report that has been made about a child protection concern with anyone. The Child Protection Officer will offer the support that you need but gossiping with others could damage reputations unfairly and/or put a child in immediate danger.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have the contact details of the relevant Child Protection Officer easily available to you (e.g. saved in your phone)</li> <li>• remove yourself from situations where you find yourself alone with a child, e.g. move to a space with other adults</li> <li>• report abuse whether observed, suspected or reported, and even if you have doubts as to whether it is abuse</li> <li>• be aware of which children you may be subconsciously excluding and ensure they are included if they wish to be</li> <li>• respect every child’s right to privacy and double check that they are genuinely comfortable with you taking a photo</li> <li>• explain to children how you will use their photo and/or story in a language they understand and get their verbal consent</li> <li>• read a child’s signals about their level of comfort with regards to physical contact like hugging</li> <li>• use the ‘two adult’ rule wherever possible and practical,, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities in which children are involved and are present at all times; this includes taking a child alone in the car or to the toilet</li> <li>• ensure that all communication with and about children is decent and respectful, rather than patronising or victimising</li> <li>• report situations in which a child displays a romantic or in some other way inappropriate attachment to a representative</li> <li>• ensure that children are adequately clothed and are not in poses that could not be interpreted as sexually suggestive when taking photographs</li> <li>• take photographs of a child without clearly asking each individual child’s permission, in a language that they understand; or gaining the permission of their parent/guardian if under the age of 5</li> <li>• wear clothing that covers your thighs, shoulders and chest whether female or male.</li> </ul>

## Putting the policy into practice

### 1. Management Structure

- 1.1. A Child Protection Officer (CPO) is appointed in each office by the Country Director/CEO. The Country Director/CEO and the CPO will be responsible for ensuring that the Child Protection Policy is upheld at all times, to educate and train staff about Child Protection (including how to deal with an allegation by a child), and to whom all issues pertaining to child protection/allegations will be referred.
- 1.2. The Country Director of each Childreach International office will establish a Child Protection committee
- 1.3. Childreach International staff / representatives must at all times foster an open and supportive atmosphere, in which information/feedback can flow freely without fear of reprimand or embarrassment.
- 1.4. Staff / representative's knowledge and application of child protection must be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Any lapse in diligence or knowledge can be addressed by meeting with the Child Protection officer.
- 1.5. The Child Protection process will be reviewed annually as part of the organisation's Quality Assurance process by the Child Protection Officer in conference with the Board of Trustees.

### 2. Recruiting / Screening staff and all representatives

- 2.1. All staff/trustees/consultants will read the policy and Behavioural Code of Conduct and they will agree to respect and abide by it when they come into contact with children or material personal to children (including the use of images of children, or any opinions the children may have registered). Their individual responsibilities for child protection will be a part of their induction. Where possible they will sign a copy of the Behavioural Code of Conduct in front of the relevant Child Protection Officer or Country Director.
- 2.2. All other Childreach International representatives will be sent a copy of the Behavioural Code of Conduct to read as part of their pre-departure packs. They must sign to say that they have read the Behavioural Code of Conduct and that they will respect and abide by it when they come into contact with children, or material personal to children (including the use of images of children, or any opinions the children may have registered). During pre-departure briefings, Childreach International staff will go through the 'Code of Conduct' with them.
- 2.3. At least two suitable references are taken up for all staff/representative and evidence of identity and any relevant qualifications are seen.
- 2.4. It is necessary for all Childreach International staff to sign the declaration to say that they have had no previous convictions for abuse against children, violent behaviour or improper and unlawful conduct. If they declare a conviction staff/representative will be asked to submit a Disclosure and Barring Service check. It is advised that where possible, staff who will be coming into direct contact with children should provide documented proof (in the form of a DBS check or international equivalent) that they have no such previous criminal convictions.

### 3. How abuse is dealt with in the organisation

- 3.1. All staff / representatives have a duty to report any incident relating to the abuse of a child that they are witness to. The report should be given to the local Child Protection Officer (CPO), or the Assistant Child Protection Officer (ACPO) if they feel more comfortable. In the event that the report cannot be made to either the local CPO or ACPO, the report can be made to the CPO of Childreach Tanzania, Childreach Nepal or Childreach India.
- 3.2. The breaching of this policy may result in the suspension of the member of staff involved, on full pay, for the duration of the ensuing investigation. All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints will be recorded and monitored by the Child Protection Officer.
- 3.3. Anyone representing Childreach International or anyone wishing to report an incident involving a representative of Childreach International, should fill in a 'Concerns about a child form' and hand it to the Child Protection officer. The form will be used and follow-on actions will be in accord with local law as dictated by the country specific protection policy.
- 3.4. Should the allegation have sufficient grounds, the accused member of staff will be referred to the police in the country of placement and country of origin.
- 3.5. Full guidelines on the disciplinary procedures at Childreach International can be found in the Disciplinary Policy.

## **4. Awareness and publication of the policy**

- 4.1. The policy must be distributed to all members of staff, trustees, and representatives nationally and internationally.
- 4.2. It will be the responsibility of each office to have the policy translated into their native language and those spoken by groups with which it works in order to enable its universal distribution.
- 4.3. This document and all accompanying procedures will be available to everyone including children, parents/carers and consultants and actively promoted.
- 4.4. It is advised that each office produce guidelines for country specific behavioural codes of conduct to be observed by staff / representatives while on project visits.
- 4.5. All children in contact with Childreach International staff / representatives should be made aware of the policy and their rights. Likewise they should be informed of the process for reporting abuse.
- 4.6. All practical case experience of child protection will be fed back into organisational training and development programmes where relevant.
- 4.7. This policy will be made available on the Childreach International website.

## **5. Training, implementing and monitoring**

- 5.1. A child protection folder will be used for reporting incidents, concerns and referrals and securely stored.
- 5.2. An incident form will be made available to all children and adults that they are to complete should they wish to report a case of abuse (on their own behalf or someone else's).
- 5.3. Complaints by parents/carers and by young people about acceptable and/or abusive behaviour towards children will be dealt with in 24 hours in order to resolve any complaint.
- 5.4. Training will be given to provide guidance on confidentiality and information-sharing which makes clear that the protection of the child is the most important consideration for Childreach International.
- 5.5. Childreach International staff/representatives must inform the Child Protection Officer immediately if new information arises that casts doubt on a team member's trustworthiness with children. Such information will be treated as confidential.
- 5.6. Child Protection must be made a formal point in all evaluation of the projects carried out by Childreach International.
- 5.7. All personal details of children must only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis unless permission has been expressly given by the child and parents/guardians in order to protect the privacy and dignity of the child.
- 5.8. Any feedback given through monthly, quarterly or annual report sheets which suggests the inappropriate conduct of a member of staff towards a child should be reported to and dealt with by the Child Protection Officer.
- 5.9. Training will be given to provide guidance on appropriate/expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children to each Childreach International office by the Child Protection Officer / Assistant Child Protection Officer or Global Child Protection Advisor.
- 5.10. Training will be given to provide guidance on expected and acceptable behaviour of children towards other children to each Childreach International office by the Child Protection Officer Assistant Child Protection Officer or Global Child Protection Advisor.
- 5.11. Training will be given to provide guidance on assessing possible risk in working with children and making sure that children are adequately supervised and protected at all times within projects and programmes to each Childreach International office by the Child Protection Officer, Assistant Child Protection Officer or Global Child Protection Advisor.
- 5.12. This policy will also be reviewed every three years from the date of signing and will be adapted whenever there is a significant change in Childreach International or if there any domestic or international legal changes. This review will be led by the Child Protection Officer and include all stakeholders.
- 5.13 All staff and representatives will be assigned a category (A-D) depending on the amount of access to children they have as part of their role at Childreach International, or the decisions that they make which may influence the

way in which others interact with children. See the table below for the criteria (to be inserted once sign off is complete).

## **6. Safe Participation**

Participation is a right enjoyed by all of our beneficiaries; however it is not an obligation. It is therefore necessary at all times during research to bear the needs of the child in mind. Research must not be performed for the sake of it, but must be a justifiable means to a legitimate end.

6.1. Before participating, all children must be made aware of their *right* to participate or not.

6.2. Once children have demonstrated an understanding of this right, their consent must be obtained individually or collectively (written or verbal).

6.3. Children must be informed of the level of confidentiality with which all Childreach International Data will be treated, including any answers, personal information or opinions they may provide.

6.4. The individual needs of the child must be considered when involving them in participation. Particularly vulnerable or abused children for example may require a particularly sensitive approach.

6.5. Children will be encouraged to offer their own opinions when participating in evaluation and feedback, and staff should not put words in their mouths.

6.6. Measures must be taken to ensure safe participation for all children involved in any activity organised by Childreach International where it takes responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the children.

6.7. Risk assessment must be completed for all activities covered in section 6.6 and necessary measures should be taken to ensure the utmost safety and wellbeing of children participating.

6.8. Parents must be made aware of that their children will meet Childreach International staff / representatives prior to any/all activities.

## **7. Working with Partners**

There are minimum standards for Childreach International's work with and through partners which include the following:

7.1 All partners that work directly or indirectly with children under the age of 18 must either have a written policy on keeping children safe, commit to adopting ours or demonstrate commitment to writing one during the partnership.

7.2 All partners will have to sign in the Memorandum of Understanding a commitment to item 7.1.