

Our Neighbours

Child Protection Policy Document

1. Communicating the issue:

- 1.1. Our Neighbours Ministry is committed to the welfare and rights of children. They will be treated with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status. This includes all children under 18 years of age.
- 1.2. Our Neighbours Ministry is committed to comply with all relevant local legislation on child rights and welfare in order to provide what is in 'best interest of the child' including labour laws that applies to children.
- 1.3. Our Neighbours Ministry encourages all staff to give respect and dignity to all children in their care. Child carers are encouraged to be good role models, spending time with each child, listening to them, encouraging children when they do something well and giving good explanations on why they should not do something else. They should keep their promises. They should provide discipline firstly through verbal means.
- 1.4. Different forms of child abuse are described:
 - 1.4.1 Physical Abuse: Any punishments and physical abuse to children like beating including with a stick or other implement, poisoning, shaking and smothering or forcing the child to work in an unsafe way/environment. These are things that deliberately and negatively affect the physical well-being of children.
 - 1.4.2 Mental Abuse: Any actions (gestures, words and behavior) that deliberately affect a child's mental/emotional well-being for example by making them afraid, anxious, annoyed or discouraged.
 - 1.4.3 Neglect: Any actions that deliberately neglect to provide the four essential rights of children (right to live, right to learn, right to participate and the right to speak).
 - 1.4.4 Sexual Abuse: Any actions with sexual intent towards children such as touching children's genitals, forcing child to watch or take part in pornography or coercing the child to have sex .
 - 1.4.5 Exploitation: Any action that leads to financial gain for a perpetrator, for example using the child as labour, or using the child's images to fund-raise for the benefit of the perpetrator.

2. Communicating the issue:

- 2.1. Our Neighbours Ministry is committed to informing children, decision makers, and the public through the media that **child abuse is wrong**. Keeping silent is also wrong.
- 2.2. Child protection policies provide a safe and positive environment for children and are foundational in the education, research and advocacy initiatives that the Our Neighbours Ministry is involved in.
- 2.3. Our Neighbours Ministry is committed to educating its staff about the importance of child protection so that children are protected from abuse by staff and others. This is also a preventive measure to protect staff and the organization's integrity.

- 2.4. Our Neighbours Ministry actively encourages the development of child protection policies and active implementation of these policies to all NGO's, groups and networks in Zimbabwe through its meetings with them.
- 2.5. Where possible children are also included as key stakeholders because the Our Neighbours Ministry believes that children have the right to speak and be heard. Involving them in the process also enables them to know their right to protection. Children are encouraged to have active cooperation, share information and be involved in advocacy initiatives.
- 2.6. All staff agrees to this policy and any new visitors, volunteers, staff (casual or permanent) are required to sign the declaration in acknowledgment of their agreement.
- 2.7. The child protection policy is reviewed every 3 years.

3. Behavioural Protocols:

- 3.1. All Staff, volunteers, interns, consultants, visitors, donors or sponsors of Our Neighbours Ministry are expected to treat all children and other staff with respect and dignity. Inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative or demeaning language or behaviour towards children will not be tolerated.
- 3.2. Each individual staff member must sign to say that they have read the policy, will respect it and understand that action will be taken in cases of inappropriate behavior.
- 3.3. There will be careful regulations about what forms of discipline can be used, encouraging primarily verbal and withdrawing privileges. Staff are strongly encouraged to inform the matron / the director when discipline is inappropriate. Discipline must be non-violent and non-humiliating.
- 3.4. Whenever possible, it should be ensured that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
- 3.5. That a child will not be engaged in any form of sexual activities or acts. Adults will always be responsible for their behavior and cannot blame the child even if the child 'provokes' or acts in a 'seductive' way.
- 3.6. That computers, mobile phones, video and digital cameras will be used appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium.
- 3.7. If protocols are broken the person involved will be disciplined appropriately according to the Organization's Code of Conduct. This may lead to the person involved losing their job.
- 3.8. Communities and children with whom Our Neighbours Ministry staff work will be informed of the protocols and will be assured that project support will not be discontinued if they report suspicious behavior. Also Staff will not be asked to leave for reporting suspicious behavior or abuse.
- 3.9. Where children are placed in communities, there will be careful screening and training of foster parents to ensure safe and adequate care will be given.
- 3.10. Any member of staff who does not report suspicious behavior or an alleged abuse will be held liable for a charge of child abuse.

4. Recruitment and Screening

- 4.1. Refrain from hiring children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury
- 4.2. Screening is equally important for volunteers/interns, Board staff and consultants.
- 4.3. Information on child protection policies must be given before and on acceptance of employment. The Child Protection Policy will be signed in agreement by all staff; in signing this, all staff acknowledge and confirm that they have not had any previous convictions for abuses against children or violent behavior. Their future employers will be informed if dismissed for abuse.
- 4.4. References should be checked preferably by telephone to give previous employers an opportunity to express concerns verbally.

- 4.5. All new engagements of staff and volunteers must provide the security and health clearances i.e. Police Criminal Check and Medical Examination Clearance Certificates.

5. Responses to Allegations

- 5.1. Immediately report concerns or allegation of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures. See Child Protection Policy Implementation Procedures, Reporting and Reacting to Allegations of Suspected Harm & Disclosure Form in Appendix 1 below.
- 5.2. Procedures must be set out by the organizations to ensure that all staff knows what to do if an allegation is made, either by a child, parents, staff member or visitor.
- 5.3. Our Neighbours Ministry encourages all staff to adhere to the country's Labor Code.
- 5.4. All members of the team will encourage their staff to be open in discussing the potential of abuse in their organization.
- 5.5. Where an allegation has been made that a staff member/visitor to the organization has abused a child then Our Neighbours Ministry will investigate and take the appropriate action to deal with the situation.
 - 5.5.1. There should be a designated person whose responsibility is to be responsible for dealing with child protection issues in the organization.
 - 5.5.2. Relationships with other organizations are encouraged for accountability and support in times such as these.
 - 5.5.3. Both victim (and perpetrator) will be treated with respect from the start of the process to the end.
 - 5.5.4. Children rarely lie in situations like this so their story must be heard and believed unless proven otherwise. They may also require extra protection if the perpetrator has not been arrested.
 - 5.5.5. The organization will have a reporting procedure where the Director is informed and then others as the need arise.
 - 5.5.6. Records should be made of all facts related to the investigation and these should be carefully and confidentially filed.
 - 5.5.7. The relevant Embassy should be informed if a foreigner is involved.
 - 5.5.8. There should be a person designated to deal with the media and the police. Where possible consideration will be made beforehand by the organizations leadership about how the police and media will be informed or involved.
 - 5.5.9. If the organization is inexperienced, asking for help from other organisations with child protection policies is encouraged.
 - 5.5.10. Counseling of the involved child is to be instituted immediately.

6. Use of children's images and personal information for promotion, fundraising and development education

When photographing or filming persons for work related purposes, Our Neighbours Ministry will:

- 6.1. Before photographing or filming a child/persons, assess and endeavour to comply with local restrictions or traditions . Permission is required by the Department of Social Services for any photographs of children to be used for publicity purposes.
- 6.2. Before photographing at the Organisation, obtain consent from the Matron / Team Leader/Management. This must be explained as to how the photograph will be used.
- 6.3. Recorded images should focus on an activity, where possible focus on groups of children/persons and not solely on individuals.
- 6.4. Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present all persons in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Persons should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- 6.5. Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.

6.6. Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.

Signature of Authorised Officer:

Authorised Officer *BELINDA L. WILSON (MRS)*

(Position in NGO) *PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR*

Overall CP Officer *RUVARASHE NCUBE (MRS)*

(Position in NGO) *H.R. STAFF CONTACT PERSON*

Date *20 / 05 / 2020*

Signature of Witness:

Name of Witness: *TINASHE MTETWA*

Date *20 / 05 / 2020*

Initial Policy Preparation Date 16 June 2014
First Review Date :- 15 May 2017
Second Review Date :- 20 May 2020
Next Review Date Due:- 20 May 2023

Child Protection Policy Implementation Procedures, Reporting and Reacting to Allegations of Suspected Harm

The following procedure will be followed for reporting and reacting to any witnessed, suspected or alleged incident of harm to a child. The guiding principle in responding to any concerns around child protection is that the safety and welfare of the child should always come first. No child should be put at more risk by any action that may be taken.

If you witness, suspect or a disclosure is made to you about a case of harm:

- Stay calm so as not to frighten the young person.
- Listen carefully to the child. If you have to ask questions, keep them to a minimum so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or ideas have been suggested during the questioning.
- Give the child time and attention.
- Allow the child to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make an accurate record of the disclosure using the Disclosure Record form (see Appendix 1). Take care to record the timing, setting and people present, the child's process as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.
- Use the child's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared.
- Reassure the child that: you are glad they have told you; they have not done anything wrong; what you are going to do next.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
- Safety of the child should always be considered to be paramount. If urgent action is required in order to protect the child then it may be prior to the reporting procedure, e.g. if the child needs urgent medical attention make arrangements to get the child to the nearest health facility and inform the medical personnel of your concerns and make them aware that the child is a protection issue.
- Do not ask the child to repeat his or her account of events to anyone.
- Do not confront or challenge the alleged person directly.
- Do not investigate or inform the parents or guardians of the child.
- At this stage any reported or suspected abuse is an allegation rather than proved.

All concerns, even when they are doubted, and allegations about abuse or harm must be reported to the Social Services Liaison Officer and to the Projects Director of Our Neighbours Ministry. The completed Disclosure Record form must be given to the Social Services Liaison Officer within one working day and passed on to Project Director.

Information in relation to child protection concerns should be shared on a "need to know" basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to child protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a child's need for protection.

A copy of the disclosure report must be kept in the appropriate child's file. Where more than one child is involved, a copy of the report must be placed in each child's file.

If allegations of child abuse are made against a staff member, volunteer or caregiver

- they must inform the Matron/House Parent/Team Leader immediately
- they should record all details as they know them and pass them on to the Social Services Liaison Officer.

Management Responsibilities

An alleged perpetrator of abuse will be immediately suspended from their normal relationship with Our Neighbours Ministry pending investigation. It should be made clear that suspension does not imply guilt but is necessary to protect both parties while undertaking investigation.

Any allegations of sexual abuse involving children within the care of the Organisation will be reported to the relevant Local Authorities.

In deciding the appropriate course of action, subject to conditions of employment, codes of practice and local law, proven child abuse will lead to:

In the case of an employee: classified as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

In the case of a volunteer: termination of their relationship with the Ministry.

In the case of a committee member: removal from the committee and termination of their relationship with the Ministry.

A detailed plan of action will be laid out by the Social Services Liaison or Projects Director using appendix 2.

OUR NEIGHBOURS MINISTRY

Child Protection Policy Document

Version 6. *Approved* 20.05.20

Signed as read & acknowledged

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Our Neighbours

'Child Safe Code of Conduct'

- All children will be treated with respect
- Staff must conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the values of Our Neighbours Ministry
- All staff will provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers
- Cultural differences will be respected
- Open communication encouraged between all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers
- Concerns of child abuse must immediately be reported to the Team Leader and Authorized Reporting Personnel
- Staff should, at all times, be transparent in their actions and whereabouts
- Staff must be responsible and know that they are accountable for their actions
- Any concerning/suspicious behaviour of their colleagues must be reported

Actions to be **condemned** by the Code of Conduct are:

- Engaging in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children
- Using offensive, inappropriate or discriminatory language when speaking with a child or young person
- Assisting with things of a personal nature (e.g. Assisting children in toileting or changing clothes, if not a designated care-giver)
- Sleeping in the same bed as the children
- Taking them alone to your own home without prior consent from Management and relevant approval from Social Services
- Developing sexual relationships with children
- Behaving provocatively or inappropriately with a child
- Inappropriately holding, cuddling, kissing, or touching of a child, unnecessarily or in a culturally insensitive way
- Condoning or participating in behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Beating or physically assaulting children
- Acting in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children
- Hiring minors as domestic labour

This document is issued alongside our Child Protection Policy

A full copy of the child protection policy is available on request from the Team Leader or Shift Supervisor.