

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### Introduction

The mission of World Childhood Foundation (“Childhood”) is to defend children’s right to a childhood and to promote better living conditions for vulnerable and exploited children at risk all over the world. Childhood wants to give children the opportunity to develop into strong, secure and responsible human beings. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) constitutes the guiding principle for Childhood and the definitions and principles of the UNCRC also provide the basis for this policy.

### The aim of the policy

The aim of the policy is to ensure that no child or group of children involved in Childhood-supported projects are harmed in any way by any employee, other representative or partner of Childhood’s, or allowed through inaction to be harmed. It covers different aspects of Childhood’s work with children: grant-making, communication, and direct interaction with children.

### Definitions

Child refers to any individual under the age of 18 as defined in the UNCRC.

### This policy applies to

- Childhood representatives (staff and consultants employed or engaged by Childhood as well as Board members and Advisory Board members)
- Corporate partners of Childhood
- Any other project visitors sent by Childhood who may come into contact with children

## **Grant making**

Since direct services and support to Childhood's target groups primarily are implemented by local project partners, it is essential that Childhood through its actions and grant-making processes ensures that organizations which receive funding from Childhood adhere to the principles of the UNCRC.

In its grant-making, Childhood shall:

- As part of the application process inquire about child protection policies developed and implemented by the applicant.
- Strongly encourage project partners that do not have a child protection policy to develop such a policy as well as provide additional capacity development support when needed.
- In dialogue with the project partners, during the assessment and monitoring of projects, ensure that children are protected from abuse and exploitation, treated with respect and dignity and able to participate in planning, implementation and monitoring of projects in accordance with the UNCRC.

## **Code of Conduct**

The way in which staff, representatives and partners of Childhood behave towards children during visits to Childhood-funded projects is a manifestation of their commitment to protecting children from abuse and exploitation, both in practise and in respecting the rights and integrity of children.

In order to increase understanding and awareness about the issues Childhood works with, Board members, Advisory Board members and corporate partners may accompany staff on project visits on a case-by-case basis. Childhood staff is responsible for making sure that all visitors who come in contact with children at Childhood-supported projects are aware of, and agree with, Childhood's Visitors Guidelines. Consideration of the project partners' time and resources should always be a priority in setting up such visits. The best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration when visits are approved, planned and carried out.

The donor-grantee relationship is inherently unequal, even though both partners are working towards the same goal. Childhood representatives and corporate partners should not abuse their position by putting the project partners in a situation where they are not free to act in the best interest of the children in their care. A request from external visitors to meet with children who have been victims of abuse and exploitation and/or an expectation on children to share traumatic personal experiences with visitors

may put organizations whose primary objective is to protect the children in a difficult situation since they are also dependent on future funding.

During project visits, Childhood representatives and corporate partners shall adhere to the following rules:

- Respect existing codes of conduct and visiting requirement adopted by the project partners, including photo policies.
- Treat the children and other beneficiaries with respect and not violate the personal integrity of children and families.
- Refrain from direct questions that compromise the integrity of the child and may potentially provoke traumatic experiences, for example regarding personal experiences of abuse, neglect, exploitation and HIV-status.
- Do not give gifts to individual or groups of children during a project visit. Any additional financial and/or in-kind donation to a particular project should be handled through contact with a Childhood country manager.
- Do not favour, or show differential treatment towards particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Do not invite individual children to meet outside the project location and do not exchange contact information with individual children.
- Do not kiss, hug or touch children in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way – and not at all if not approached first by the child.
- Any concerns about suspected or alleged abuse or exploitation of a child in a project supported by Childhood or breach of this policy shall immediately be reported to Childhood's Project Director/Executive Director and Secretary General.
- In cases of suspected abuse, Childhood staff, board members, partners and visitors shall not try to interrogate the alleged victim but make sure that the case is handled by local, properly trained staff and ensure that the matter is properly followed up by Childhood.

## **Communication**

This section summarizes Childhood's policy for communication about children. For all external communication about Childhood's projects, the Media Guidelines is the guiding document.

For fundraising and awareness raising purposes, Childhood uses pictures and stories about children in the projects supported in different parts of the world. Childhood acknowledges the responsibility towards an individual child that such depictions entail. The purpose of the policy for communication is to protect individual children from secondary exploitation and victimization and to ensure that Childhood's communication does not reinforce stereotypes and miscommunication about children and families in vulnerable situations. Whilst the aim is to protect the integrity of the individual child, the child's right to express itself and to its identity should also be taken into account.

All communication about children shall be in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Children shall be presented with dignity in text and photographs without manipulation or sensationalist angles.
- Childhood should avoid portraying children as helpless victims and in ways that reinforce stereotypes about vulnerable children from the developing world in need of saviours from the developed world.
- No pictures of children that can be interpreted as sexualised or degrading or shaming in any way shall be published. No pictures of children who can be identified as victims of sexual abuse and exploitation shall be taken nor published.
- Pictures of inactive children should be avoided and preference given to pictures where children communicate their rights and experiences (for example through playing, participating in school or other activities, interacting with other children, relatives or local staff).
- If the purpose of taking a picture and/or interviewing a child is to publish and/or use it for fundraising/awareness raising, specific consent must be sought from the child/children as well as the NGO responsible for the child. The purpose should be made clear to the consent giver. Even with consent given, the final decision and assessment of the appropriate use of picture is the responsibility of Childhood.
- Case studies to illustrate the work of Childhood supported projects and raise awareness about child protection issues should be used in a way that does not disclose any sensitive information about any individual child.