

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Child Protection** refers to mechanisms put in place to see that a child is secure and safe in an environment which is conducive for its positive development. This is also protecting children against diseases, abuse, torture, neglect and risks which can easily interfere with normal balanced development. This protection is premised on both the natural human care of the new generation and UN Convention on the rights of children.

**What is child abuse?** It is generally accepted that there are five forms of abuse:

### 1. PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. This also includes the act of encouraging others to abuse or beat another child whether this is another carer or a peer.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child.

Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of omission, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

### 2. EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the persistent ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

### 3. SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to them, including penetrative acts such as rape, buggery or oral sex, or non-penetrative acts such as fondling.

Sexual abuse may also include noncontact activities, such as involving children in the viewing or the production of pornographic material (taking photographs of nude children), watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from different walks of life. Abusers can be found in every social class, ethnic, cultural and religious groups. The idea that ‘stranger danger’ as a major issue in child protection has featured heavily in the media and although it is imperative to raise the awareness towards predatory strangers, it is equally crucial to understand that abusers can be relatives and friends of the child or in a profession that involves working with children.

#### 4. NEGLECT

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/ or psychological needs which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing; failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs. Such needs include food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth. A lack of appropriate care, including access to health care, may result in persistent or severe exposure, through negligence, to circumstances which endanger the child.

#### 5. CHILD LABOUR

Child labour refers to the employment of children in tasks which are unfair or beyond their powers of endurance and ability. An example of this is instructing a small child to fetch water from a well and expecting them to physically carry the 20 litre jerry can.

#### 6. NON-ORGANIC FAILURE TO THRIVE

Children who significantly fail to reach normal growth and developmental milestones (ie physical growth, weight, motor, social and intellectual development) where physical and genetic reasons for the failure have been medically eliminated and a diagnosis of non-organic failure to thrive has been established.

### **GUIDELINES FOR ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF ABUSE FROM A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON**

#### **DO**

1. Treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the child as if you believe what they are saying.
2. Tell the child they are right to tell you.
3. Reassure them that they are not to blame.

4. Be honest about your own position, who you have to tell, and why.
5. Tell the child what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening.
6. Take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – tell your nominated person immediately.
7. Write down everything said and what was done. (See notes on recording).

### **DO NOT**

1. Do not make promises you can't keep.
2. Do not interrogate the child – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the police and relevant authorities, who have experience in this.
3. Do not cast doubt on what the child has told you, do not interrupt or change the subject
4. Do not say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse.
5. Do not do nothing -make sure you tell your nominated child protection person immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.
6. Do not take sole responsibility – if concerned, consult with others.

Fear inhibits people from reporting a wrong doing. We all have a duty to make sure concerns are reported; only then can appropriate action be taken. Tell the nominated person in charge of the project as he/she will be able to get further advice and/or refer the situation to the relevant authorities or the police. If for any reason you cannot tell the nominated person, then you should tell a member of the executive chain of the charity.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

- DO** put the code of conduct into practice.
- DO** remember that the Ugandan African culture may be different from your own (specifically for volunteers).
- DO** plan activities, such that more than one other person is present, or at least you are within sight or hearing others.
- DO** work with other members of staff/volunteers as a team.

- DO** respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- DO** listen to children's views and concerns.
- DO** encourage others to discuss attitudes and behaviours they do not like.
- DO** remember that someone else might misinterpret your action.
- DO** recognise that caution is required even in sensitive moments, such as when dealing with bullying or bereavement.
- DO NOT** permit abusive peer activities (e.g. bullying).
- DO NOT** allow children inside your accommodation except in an emergency.
- DO NOT** play rough physical contact games with children.
- DO NOT** have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
- DO NOT** jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- DO NOT** show favouritism to any individual (e.g. with money, gifts, etc).
- DO NOT** give excessive gifts to children or their families.
- DO NOT** make suggestive remarks or gestures to children even in fun.
- DO NOT** ignore others who do not put the code of conduct into practice.

All staff and volunteers must report any complaints, allegations or concerns to the charity without delay by contacting; Dr. James Ssekiwanuka, Executive Director, CALM Africa.