

POLICY FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Policy on Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults: December 2017

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

PURPOSE

The Protection Policy aims to promote awareness amongst Cambridge Global Health Partnerships (CGHP) staff and volunteers of the need to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation and to recognise and respond appropriately to signs of abuse or exploitation.

As an organisation which comes into contact with vulnerable children and adults, CGHP must foster a culture which promotes the safety of the vulnerable people with whom they work and encourage good practice amongst staff and volunteers.

The Policy is relevant for staff and volunteers working for CGHP and also for consultants contracted by the organisation, donors visiting the place of work of CGHP, photographers and journalists writing stories about the work of the staff or volunteers.

The Policy will be shared and discussed with CGHP's partners and those responsible for the projects in which the volunteers work and any partnership agreements should highlight the commitment to the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

By implementing this Policy, CGHP staff and volunteers recognise they have a duty of care towards the vulnerable children and adults with whom they work and a responsibility to keep them safe.

PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of the Protection Policy are:

- Zero tolerance of abuse and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults
- All actions must be in the best interests of the child (in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- All children and vulnerable adults have equal rights to be protected from abuse and exploitation
- Volunteers and staff should promote and advocate for the rights of children and vulnerable adults and encourage social inclusion and a protective environment for the vulnerable
- A protective environment includes government commitment and legislation to fulfil human rights; address harmful attitudes, customs and practices; encourage open discussion of protection issues; develop children's life skills, knowledge and participation; build the knowledge and capacity of families and communities to support children and the vulnerable; provide essential services including health, social services and education (*UNICEF*)
- CGHP must ensure that those who are entrusted with working with children and vulnerable adults do not abuse their position of trust

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF THE POLICY

REDUCING RISK¹

CGHP staff and volunteers should be proactive in reducing the risk of abuse or exploitation of children and vulnerable adults:

- Avoid compromising situations that may increase vulnerability – do not spend time alone with a child or vulnerable adult either in their home, overnight, in a car or any other secluded place. Meet with them in public places as much as possible
- Do not engage in inappropriate touch or physical contact or any form of sexual intercourse with a child or vulnerable adult
- Do not physically or verbally assault or abuse a child or vulnerable adult
- Do not exploit children or adults in any way or form
- Have adult company when visiting or meeting children- work in pairs
- Be aware that age difference creates a power imbalance between adults and children
- Encourage a culture of mutual accountability so that potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Job descriptions should include reference to responsibilities for implementing the Protection Policy
- Staff and volunteers who will be working with children or vulnerable adults will be subject to a criminal record check/background check to exclude those with a past sexual offences record from employment in accordance with government laws and policies
- All staff and volunteers, new and existing, are required to sign the Statement of Commitment stating that they have read and understood the Protection Policy and agree to be bound by it (See Volunteer Agreement Form)
- CGHP will provide learning opportunities for staff and volunteers to develop the necessary skills and understanding to keep children and vulnerable adults safe
- The host organisation where the volunteer works must be aware of the CGHP Protection Policy and if possible, sign the statement of commitment

¹ International HIV/AIDS Alliance Child Protection Policy

RESPONDING TO CASES OF ABUSE

All procedures must be in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult

All procedures must fall within the government laws on child protection

CGHP staff and volunteers have an obligation to make themselves aware of who is responsible for dealing with protection issues in their work environment and in the community in which they work and whether their host organisation has a protection policy in place. They should have the contact details of local child protection and social work services and other relevant agencies. It is recommended that a mapping exercise of all relevant local agencies should be carried out in each geographical area where volunteers work. They should also have the contact details of the person in CGHP who is responsible for protection issues locally and internationally and be clear with whom they should raise any concerns they have about unacceptable behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults. They also need to be assured of confidentiality by the person in CGHP who is responsible for protection issues.

Before any behaviour is reported as child abuse, it is important that CGHP staff and volunteers are familiar with the basic signs of child abuse. It may not be easy to identify, and investigation needs to be done into the facts and the context, as well as talking to the child or vulnerable adult. See appendix 2.

Working with cases of abuse whether children or vulnerable adults is extremely challenging for those providing care and support for them. Dealing with abuse in the correct manner could make the difference between the perpetrator being convicted or acquitted. A child who has disclosed abuse is vulnerable and needs special care.

Here are some important things to remember when dealing with alleged cases of abuse:

- The confidentiality of the alleged child or vulnerable adult victim, the alleged offender and the person reporting the case, must be respected
- Personal information can only be shared upon explicit and informed consent of the alleged child or vulnerable adult victim or guardian or person reporting the case
- All necessary steps shall be taken in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult to protect the child or vulnerable adult from further harm
- Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report child or vulnerable adult abuse
- Verbal notification of alleged abuse must be followed up in writing within 24 hours to the CGHP team leader/Programme Director and the relevant form must be filled (see appendix 2)
- If the team leader/Programme Director has reasonable grounds to suspect abuse, the team leader/Programme Director reports to the relevant local authority – police and child protection services. It is not the role of staff/volunteers to prove the abuse occurred. That is the role of the statutory authorities. However, if the response from authorities is slow, the team leader/Programme Director should follow up until the child or vulnerable adult is safe
- Keep any confidential information on cases of alleged or actual child or vulnerable adult abuse in a lockable, non-transportable, storage container with access strictly controlled

PARTICIPATION

**The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that
“the child has a right to express an opinion and to have that opinion
taken into account in any matter or procedure that affects the child”**

It is possible that CGHP or other organisation sending out volunteers, will work with groups of children or vulnerable adults, in which case they must provide a safe environment where children and vulnerable adults have the confidence to speak out. When working with children or vulnerable adults, the following are important:

- Listen to children and vulnerable adults
- Find out what makes children or vulnerable adults feel safe – ask them to draw pictures or write stories or act out what makes them feel safe
- Provide opportunities to talk separately to girls/females and boys/males
- Create safe areas – ask the children or vulnerable adults to design a safe area
- Involve children in child rights training
- Encourage children and vulnerable adults to speak out and share their ideas and concerns
- Tell the children and vulnerable adults about the Protection Policy and its contents, discuss with them and get their feedback
- Have a suggestions box– this provides a confidential way for children and vulnerable adults to make suggestions or express their concerns

REPORTING, PUBLICATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND COMMUNICATION ABOUT CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

As always the guiding principle is the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult – when determining what is in their best interests, their right to have their views taken into account must be respected in accordance with their age and maturity.

CGHP has a responsibility towards the children and vulnerable adults they work with, to ensure that they are treated with dignity and that their rights are not violated through any images of them or reports concerning them.

The following must be avoided:

- Inaccurate representation of children or vulnerable adults through words and images
- Communication that shames, degrades or victimises children or vulnerable adults
- Taking pictures or statements without informed consent from the child (according to their age) and/or their parents/guardians
- Depiction of children or vulnerable adults in sexually provocative poses
- Photographers and film makers should not spend time with, or have access to children without supervision

The following should be noted:

- Use only the first name of the child or vulnerable adult (or change the name) and do not reveal identifying information, for example where they live, their school and so on
- Ensure photographs, films, videos or any other images present children or vulnerable adults in a dignified and respectful manner
- Every child and adult has a right to privacy and confidentiality
- Introduce parents/guardians and children to the concept of informed consent – and explain how the information relating to them will be used
- Make sure that children and their parents/guardians and vulnerable adults, are aware of what, where and how the images may be used

- Images should be focused on children or vulnerable adults involved in an activity and wherever possible, feature groups rather than individuals
- Wherever possible, children and vulnerable adults should be allowed to give their own account or views on issues as opposed to adults or organisations speaking for them
- The child or vulnerable adult has the right to stop any interview or photographing at any stage

DISSEMINATION, REVIEW AND MONITORING

Where CGHP has link programmes the Policy will be adapted and where necessary, translated. In every country it will be necessary to identify services which can respond to any violation of children's rights in terms of child protection. Services for vulnerable adults may be different from those working with children. The procedure for reporting and responding to child or adult protection incidents should relate to the local services and resources available.

The Protection Policy will be disseminated to existing staff and volunteers, newly recruited staff and volunteers, partners with whom CGHP and the volunteers work and the host organisations in the place of work of the volunteer.

The Policy will be reviewed after the first year of implementation and adjusted if necessary. Thereafter it will be reviewed every 3 years.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: DEFINITIONS AND SIGNS OF ABUSE

Sending organisation	CGHP or another organisation with whom the volunteer is undertaking a placement abroad
Child	The definition of a child in this policy is the one contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A child is “a human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”.
Child Protection	<p>Child Protection is a term that describes policies, standards, guidelines and activities that seek to protect children from unintended and intended harm.</p> <p>Protection issues include abuse, exploitation, trafficking, child labour, lack of access to justice and violation of children’s rights. Child protection refers to preventing and responding to these situations.</p>
Vulnerable Adult	A vulnerable adult is defined as a person aged 18 or over, who is in receipt of or may be in need of community care services, by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation
Signs of Abuse	
Type of Abuse	Possible Signs²
Physical abuse occurs when a person physically hurts or threatens to hurt a child or vulnerable adult, or creates a significant risk of physical hurt to a child or vulnerable adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bruises, burns, cuts -Excuses given to explain injury or refusal to discuss injuries -Reluctance to go home or have parents/guardians informed -Withdrawal from physical contact -Aggressive behaviour to others
Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by an older or more powerful child or adult for sexual stimulation or gratification Sexual abuse can also occur for vulnerable adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Physical indicators on genital areas -Inappropriate interest in, or knowledge of, sexual acts -Sexually transmitted infections - Underage pregnancy
Emotional and verbal abuse occurs when a person repeatedly or severely attacks a child or vulnerable adult’s self-esteem, through use of language, gestures or behaviour that is degrading, isolating, humiliating, terrorising, rejecting or corrupting, or that ignores a child or vulnerable adult’s need for basic emotional care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Low self esteem -Increased anxiety or apathy -Delayed mental, physical or emotional development -Drug or alcohol abuse -Fear of new situations -Inappropriate response to painful situations
Neglect is inattention to the basic necessities of life such as shelter, education, medical care, supervision, clothing and safe environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Frequent hunger -Insufficient or unsuitable clothing -Poor personal hygiene -Low self esteem -Non-attendance at school -Lack of medical care -Inadequate or unsafe shelter

² International HIV/AIDS Alliance

Appendix 2:

FORM FOR REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT ABUSE³

Please complete this form if you believe that a child's or vulnerable adult's safety is in danger. All protection concerns should be reported immediately to the team leader/ Programme Director. The report must be treated in strict confidence.

1. Personal Information

Your name.....

Job title
.....

Place of work.....

Relationship to the child/vulnerable adult.....

Your contact details.....

2. Child/vulnerable adult information

Name of child/vulnerable adult.....

Age of child/vulnerable adult.....

Gender

Address
.....

Child's guardian(s)

Address of guardian(s)

3. Abuse concern

Is concern based on observation or suspicion?

If concern is based on secondary sources, give name of information source
.....

Did the child/vulnerable adult report the incident to you?

What is the nature of the alleged abuse?
.....

Date of alleged incident
.....

³ International HIV/AIDS Alliance Child Protection Policy
Policy on Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults
Cambridge Global Health Partnerships - 2017

Time and place of incident

.....

Name of alleged perpetrator

.....

Job title

.....

Describe your personal observations (factually)

.....

.....

.....

.....

Give actual record of what the child/vulnerable adult or source said to you

.....

.....

.....

Provide names of witnesses if applicable

.....

.....

Any other comments

.....

.....

.....

Action taken

.....

.....

.....

.....

Signed.....

Date

REFERENCES

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF *Child Protection Strategy 2008*

UNICEF *Child Protection information sheets*

UNICEF *Principles and Guidelines for Ethical Reporting on children and young people under 18 years*

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Southern Africa Child Protection Strategy and Guidelines for Implementation 2010

Keeping Children Safe Coalition *Standards for child protection*

Australian government AusAID *Child Protection Policy 2013*

International HIV/AIDS Alliance *Child Protection Policy 2005*

Canadian Red Cross *Child Protection Policy 2008*

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