



Child Protection Policy

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose

Introduction

ACYP is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation in Uganda. We envision a world where underprivileged children and young people have the opportunities to fulfil their life ambitions. We work with vulnerable children and young people in an open and accessible manner, protecting and empowering them through education, health, nutrition, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability. We have been doing this work since 2010, and our commitment continues to make the world a better place for the less privileged. ACYP believes that child protection is fundamental to ensuring that children below 18 have the rights, information and space in which they can express their views and communicate effectively with other children and adults. Our child protection mandate is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and in line with the Laws of Uganda

Purpose

This policy outlines ACYP's commitment to safeguarding all children who come into contact with our organization. We recognize that all children have the right to protection from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Children can only become empowered agents of change to improve their lives and that of their families and communities if they are safeguarded from abuse, discrimination and harm of any kind, be it physical, sexual, emotional or neglect. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone acting on behalf of ACYP. This policy is created in line with the UN convention on the rights of the child, and in line with the laws of Uganda.

2.0 Our Core Values of Child Protection

- 1- Adherence to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Laws of Uganda about child protection

Therefore, All children and adolescents involved in ACYP activities, projects and programmes have the right to have their health, safety and well-being, and their best interests considered as top priority; To have their development promoted and safeguarded so that they can achieve their full potential; To be valued, respected and understood within the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity; To be listened

to and to have their views given careful consideration, and to be encouraged and helped to participate in decisions which affect them, including in child protection decisions.

2- Non-negotiable Obligation

ACYP staff, volunteers and all in contact with children have an absolute duty to protect children from abuse, mistreatment, and exploitation from within organisations intended for their benefit. This duty is imperative and non-negotiable.

3- Transparency

ACYP believes that the strong procedures and communication structures are paramount. Therefore, issues of child protection should be discussed openly and are understood between children and adults. Also, to improve awareness of child protection policies and practices, open lines of communication both internally and externally within ACYP and partners. So ACYP staff and volunteers should utilise the framework to deal openly, consistently and fairly with allegations concerning both direct and indirect abuse.

4- Child Participation

ACYP strives to advocate for a participation of children in all aspects that affect them. Throughout the organisation's planning, children participation is key. Their voices should be heard and respected. Effective and sustainable protection for children can only be achieved through listening to children. Staff, volunteers and all that come in contact with children should create spaces where children feel able and willing to speak about abuse, free from abusers and which empowers them to become actors in their own protection without further discrimination or shame.

5- Confidentiality

We will ensure confidentiality, and that information is shared on a need to know basis, for the safety of the child.

3.0 Definitions:

Child

Anyone under the age of 18 years.

Child Protection

According to ACYP's child protection explanation, it is the organization's responsibility to ensure that the activities and programs run by its staff and volunteers do not endanger children, that is, they do not put them in danger of harm or abuse, and that any worries the organisation may have regarding the safety of the children involved in the activities and programs they participate in are communicated to the relevant authorities.

Child Abuse:

a) Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse involves any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person. Here are some examples: Hitting (Slapping, punching, or kicking, hitting with objects), Physical Force (shoving, pushing, or restraining, biting or scratching, hair pulling), Injuries (burning or scalding, breaking bones or fractures, choking or suffocating), Other Harmful Acts (Poisoning, Inappropriate use of physical restraints, throwing objects at someone, Making someone swallow harmful substances), Abuse towards children (shaking a baby, which can cause severe head trauma, fabricated or induced illness, where a caregiver makes a child ill)

b) Sexual Abuse:

With Sexual abuse, ACYP believes that **"It is never the child's fault"**. Here are some examples of sexual abuse,

- **Contact Sexual Abuse:**

- Any touching of a child's genitals, anus, or breasts.
- Forcing a child to touch the abuser's or another person's genitals.
- Oral sex, vaginal penetration, or anal penetration.
- Sexual activity with a child, regardless of whether the child "seemed willing."
- Making a child undress or pose for sexual photos or videos.

- **Non-Contact Sexual Abuse:**

- Exposing one's genitals to a child.
- Showing a child pornography or other sexually explicit material.
- Making a child watch sexual acts.
- Online grooming: building a relationship with a child online for sexual purposes.
- Encouraging a child to engage in sexualized behaviours.
- Taking, viewing, or distributing sexual images of children.

c) Emotional abuse:

Emotional abuse in children, also known as psychological abuse, can have a profound and lasting impact on their well-being. It involves patterns of behaviour that damage a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth. Here are some examples:

- **Verbal Abuse:**

- Name-calling and insults: Regularly using derogatory terms to describe the child.
- Criticizing and belittling: Constantly putting down the child's efforts, appearance, or abilities.
- Threatening: Using words to instil fear of physical harm or other negative consequences.
- Humiliating: Publicly shaming or embarrassing the child.
- Blaming and scapegoating: Consistently holding the child responsible for problems or mistakes.

- **Emotional Manipulation:**

- Ignoring and rejecting: Withholding affection, attention, or communication.
- Isolating: Preventing the child from having social interactions with peers or other family members.
- Terrorizing: Creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.
- Exploiting and corrupting: Encouraging the child to engage in inappropriate or harmful behaviours.
- Denying reality: Minimizing or dismissing the child's feelings or experiences.
- Making the child feel that they are unloved or unwanted.

- **Other Examples:**

- Exposing children to domestic violence: Witnessing violence between parents or caregivers.
- Creating an environment of fear: Making the child constantly anxious or afraid.
- Withholding affection: Never showing love, warmth, or positive reinforcement.
- Inconsistent parenting: Having unpredictable or erratic behaviours.
- Failure to provide emotional support: not being there for the child when they are upset or need comfort.
- Pressuring a child to take on adult responsibilities: such as caring for other family members.

d) **Neglect:**

Child neglect is a form of child maltreatment that involves the failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, educational, or medical needs. It's important to understand that neglect can take many forms, and it's not always easy to recognize. Here are some examples of neglect

Physical Neglect:

- Failure to provide adequate food, clothing, or shelter:
 - A child consistently being hungry or malnourished.
 - A child wearing dirty or inappropriate clothing for the weather.
 - A child living in unsafe or unsanitary conditions.
- Lack of supervision:
 - Leaving a young child unattended for extended periods.
 - Failing to protect a child from hazards.
 - Allowing a child to engage in dangerous activities without supervision.
- Medical neglect:
 - Not seeking necessary medical care for a sick or injured child.
 - Refusing to provide prescribed medication or treatment.
 - Ignoring a child's dental needs.

Emotional Neglect:

- Failure to provide emotional support or nurturing:

- Ignoring a child's emotional needs.
- Being unresponsive to a child's cries or requests for comfort.
- Withholding affection or love.
- consistently being emotionally unavailable.
- Lack of psychological care:
 - Failing to provide needed mental health care.

Educational Neglect:

- Failure to ensure a child's education:
 - Not enrolling a child in school.
 - Allowing chronic truancy.
 - Not addressing a child's special educational needs.

4.0 Responsibilities:

All Staff and Volunteers:

- To be aware of and adhere to this policy.
- To report any concerns about a child's safety.
- To maintain appropriate boundaries with children.
- To participate in child protection training.

Designated Child Protection Officer:

- To oversee the implementation of this policy.
- To receive and manage reports of child protection concerns.
- To liaise with relevant authorities.
- To maintain records of child protection concerns.

Management:

- To provide resources and support for child protection.
- To review and update this policy regularly.

5.0 Procedures:

Reporting Concerns:

- Any person who has concerns about a child's safety must report them to the Designated Child Protection Officer immediately.
- Reports will be treated confidentially and investigated promptly.
- Details of how to report concerns will be clearly communicated to all staff and volunteers.

Safe Recruitment:

- We will conduct thorough background checks on all staff and volunteers who will work with children.
- We will provide child protection training during induction.

Code of Conduct:

- All staff and volunteers must adhere to a code of conduct that outlines appropriate behaviour with children.
- This includes guidelines on physical contact, communication, and boundaries.

Information Sharing:

- Information about child protection concerns will only be shared with those who need to know, in accordance with legal requirements.

Responding to Allegations:

- All allegations of child abuse will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.
- We will cooperate with relevant authorities in any investigation.
- We will provide support to any child who has been harmed.

6. Monitoring and Review:

ACYP shall review the policy regularly to ensure effectiveness and compliance. Progress, performance and lessons learned are reported by the Child Protection Focal

Person to the Management Board annually and included in ACYP's annual reports. Monitoring and evaluation will be done by checking whether the standards from the Child Protection Policy are implemented and whether safeguards are working.

7. Local Context Considerations:

All staff, volunteers, intern should put into consideration the following guiding local frameworks and structures

- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
- The National Child Policy 2020
- The National Toll free line 116 to report all violence against children
- Child Act
- Constitution of the Republic of Uganda
- Probation and Local Government facilities
- Police
- NGO on child protection

8. Statement of Commitment to ACYP Child Protection Policy

I, _____, have read and understood this Child Protection Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing and promoting the child protection policies, procedures and practices contained within this document while working or associated with ACYP. I understand that working with children under ACYP may involve being investigated for previous conviction and allegations made against me with respect to child protection issues; and providing two character references.

_____ (Name)

_____ (role)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)

9. Contacts

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