



## **Child Protection Policy for African Impact and The Happy Africa Foundation**

*Safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone.*

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# Safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone.

## **INTRODUCTION**

African Impact and the Happy Africa Foundation recognise its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. We have based our policy on the UN Standards for Child Protection.

We are aware that many children and young people are the victims of different kinds of abuse and exploitation. They can be subjected to social factors that have an adverse impact upon their lives including domestic violence, substance misuse, bullying, child prostitution and ritualistic abuse.

We aim to create a safe environment within which children can thrive and adults can work with the security of clear guidance.

The aim of the African Impact and The Happy Africa Foundation Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice through:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of African Impact and The Happy Africa Foundation
- Allowing all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to child protection issues
- Deterring people from working or volunteering with us who do not have the right intentions

We strive to integrate this policy into our operations, relationships with partners and communities and with volunteers who travel with us to create a safer environment for children.

## **The Child Protection Committee for African Impact and The Happy Africa Foundation**



**Greg Bows**  
**Managing Director of African Impact**



**Andrew Procter**  
**Operation Director of African Impact**



**Michelle Procter**  
**The Happy Africa Foundation Manager**



**Leonora Reid**  
**Child Protection Officer**

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## OUR POLICY

**Under the terms of this policy anyone under the age of 18 (not yet reached their 18th birthday) is considered to be a child, including volunteers.**

### Policy Statement

African Impact and Happy Africa Foundation are committed to the following:

- ☀ We are committed to safeguarding children and young people from harm and ensuring children's rights to protection are clearly understood. All children have an equal right to protection.
- ☀ We are committed to our responsibility to promote child safe practices and inform our staff and volunteers of good and poor practice
- ☀ We take positive action to prevent child abuse becoming active within our organisation and will take serious action if this ever happens
- ☀ Our decision and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by 'the best interest of the child' and any concerns will be dealt with swiftly and appropriately

### Who our Policy is for

This policy is aimed at all African Impact staff, volunteers and partners and for The Happy Africa Foundation staff and partners.

### The roles we have in place to support our policy

Child Protection Officer - *Leonora Reid*

This person has the knowledge and training to support the policy and give guidance when issues arise. All incidents must be reported to the Child Protection Officer. They can be contacted at [cpo@africanimpact.com](mailto:cpo@africanimpact.com)

Child Protection Team - *Michelle Procter, Leonora Reid, Sonja Hughes*

Design the Child Protection Policy, communication and tools for Project Teams and the Office

Child Protection Committee - *Greg Bows, Andrew Procter, Michelle Procter, Leonora Reid*

This group will continuously sign off changes to the policy and it's supporting tools and give guidance when issues need to be escalated from the Child Protection Officer. This will happen if an allegation involves a staff member or volunteer, or the impact to the project or business is high

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### Business Manager at each Project location

Responsibility for ensuring steps are taken to induct and train project team members and volunteers on our Child Protection Policy. They will also be involved when issues arise and work with the Child Protection Officer to resolve these

### **How often will we monitor and review our policy and procedures**

The implementation of procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed. The Child Protection Officer will do a quarterly report on progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas where changes are required to the Child Protection Team so amendments can be made to the policy or supporting procedures.

The policy will be fully reviewed every 2 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

### **PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE**

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework such as the African Impact Volunteer Code of Conduct.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore **NOT** the responsibility of employees or participants to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child.

### **What is good practice**

All staff and volunteers should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Always work in an open environment e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets
- Make the experience fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- Treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- Always put the welfare of the young person first, before winning e.g. in sports
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance, thinking how others may perceive closeness to a child or young person
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual or physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person.
- Request written parental consent if volunteers or staff are required to transport young people in their cars
- Gain written parental consent for any travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays, day trips
- Ensure that if groups of children or young adults are taken away, they should be accompanied by a mix of male and female staff and carers where possible
- Ensure that at away events adults should not enter a child or young person's room or invite children or young people to their rooms

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- Be a positive role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children or young people or playing explicit or inappropriate music in accommodation or in vehicles
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Secure written parental consent for the staff or volunteers to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given
- Respect the communication procedures with children on our Sponsor a Child program

### What is poor practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by staff and volunteers:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Taking young people alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- An adult sharing a room with a person under 17 years old (under 18 volunteers will have written permission from their parents to share rooms with over 18's)
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- Reducing a child or young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Doing things of a personal nature that the child can do for themselves
- Taking or using inappropriate photos of children
- Contacting children directly who are part of our Sponsor a Child program rather than through our Sponsor a Child team

When a case arises where it is impractical to avoid a certain situation e.g. transporting a young person in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent or carer and the young person involved.

If during your care;

- You accidentally hurt a young person
- A young person seems distressed in any manner
- A young person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- A young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done

...report any such incidents as soon as possible to a Project Team member and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

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## **RECOGNISING SIGNS OF ABUSE**

It can often be difficult to recognise abuse. The signs listed in these guidelines are only indicators and many can have reasonable explanations. Children may behave strangely or seem unhappy for many reasons, as they move through the stages of childhood or their families experience changes. It is nevertheless important to know what could indicate that abuse is taking place and to be alert to the need to consult further.

Someone can abuse a child by actively inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can take place within a family, in an institution or community setting, by telephone or on the Internet. Abuse can be carried out by someone known to a child or by a complete stranger.

If you are worried about a child it is important that you keep a written record of any physical or behavioural signs and symptoms. In this way you can monitor whether or not a pattern emerges and provide evidence to any investigation if required.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, and suffocating. It can also result when a parent or carer deliberately causes the ill health of a child in order to seek attention.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse happens when a child's need for love, security, praise and recognition is not met. It usually co-exists with other forms of abuse. Emotionally abusive behaviour occurs if a parent, carer or authority figure is consistently hostile, rejecting, threatening or undermining. It can also result when children are prevented from social contact with others, or if developmentally inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of someone else.

### **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 what is happening. This may include physical contact, both penetrative and non-penetrative, or involve no contact, such as watching sexual activities or looking at pornographic material. Encouraging children to act in sexually inappropriate ways is also abusive.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN**

In the event that a child makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against an adult or another child, if you are a volunteer it is important you involve a member of the project team as soon as possible and follow the process below.

Sometimes as a volunteer or team member you may just feel concerned about a child but do not know whether to share your concerns or not. In this situation you should always raise your concern with your Project Manager who will listen and decide on the best course of action.

If you receive allegations or concerns via an anonymous letter or SMS, please discuss the next steps with the Child Protection Officer.

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If the allegation is from a child resident to the country of the project;

### **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS - THE STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE OR IF YOU ARE TOLD ABOUT ALLEGATIONS BY A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON**

1. Listen to the child or young person and/or closely observe their presentation and behaviour
2. Let them know that you take what they are saying seriously
3. Do **not** attempt to question or interview them yourself
4. Let them know that you will need to tell someone else in order to help them.  
**Do not promise to keep what they tell you secret**
5. Inform your Project Manager as soon as possible
6. Make a written record of the incident or events - **ask for our template called 'Child Protection - Statement'**

**Do not take further action unless you are asked by your Project Manager**  
**Keep any information confidential from other staff and volunteers - if the information gets into the wrong hands it can be harmful to the child**

### **PROJECT MANAGER - STEPS TO TAKE ONCE YOU HEAR ANY ALLEGATIONS**

1. Listen to the allegation from the child, young person, staff member or volunteer
2. Inform your Business Manager and Child Protection Officer urgently if the allegations involve a member of staff or volunteer
3. Complete a **Child Protection Incident Report**
4. If you feel confident the case needs further investigation call the Child Protection Partner relevant to your country (e.g. Childline, Social Welfare)
5. Let the person who reported the allegation to you know the steps you have taken and what will happen next
6. Remind any people involved you will inform them of progress but the case is now in the hands of the authorities

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The responsibility for investigating allegations of abuse, whether they result from the disclosure of a child or the concerns of an adult, lies with our Child Protection Partners and government authorities and we must respect how this is dealt with locally.

A full report should be made out by the Project Manager and given to the Child Protection Partner in confidence.

The Child Protection partner will advise the Project Manager when or whether to inform the child's parents or carers about any concerns.

If the Child protection Partner decide to pursue a child protection investigation, the Project Manager should:

- Work closely and collaboratively with all professionals involved in the investigation, in order to keep the child safe
- Attend a child protection conference if you are invited. You will be asked to provide information about your involvement with the child, which is why it is important to keep records of your concerns
- Attend any subsequent child protection review conferences

If a volunteer passed on information from a child about alleged abuse, it is important for the Project Manager to understand what is the expected involvement of the volunteer (e.g. as a witness). Speak to Childline to find out so the Volunteer can be informed of their required role.

### **ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS**

Allegations can be made for a variety of reasons. Some of the most common are:

- a) Abuse has actually taken place;
- b) Something happens to a child that reminds them of an event that happened in the past – the child is unable to recognise that the situation and the people are different
- c) Children can misinterpret a persons language or actions because they are reminded of something else
- d) Some children know how powerful an allegation can be; if they are angry with a person about something they can make an allegation as a way of hitting out
- e) An allegation can be a way of seeking attention

All allegations should be brought to the notice of the Project Manager immediately. In cases where the allegation is made against the Project Manager, the complainant should be the Business Manager at the project;

- The Project Manager must contact the Child Protection Officer and Business Manager to inform them of what has happened and the steps you have taken and plan to take
- Make sure, where possible, the child in question is safe and away from the alleged abuser
- If after discussion and there is enough evidence to suggest further steps require to be taken, contact the Child Protection Partner in the country the abuse took place
- Decide with the Child Protection Officer and Child Protection Partner if the parents or carers of the child should be contacted and by who

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- Irrespective of any investigation by the Child Protection Partner or the Police, you should follow the appropriate disciplinary procedure against any members of staff or volunteers - common practice is for the alleged abuser to be suspended from work or volunteer duty until the outcome of any investigation is clear. It is important to deal with the situation in a fair and professional way for the staff member or volunteer until all the facts are available.
- Consider whether the person has access to children anywhere else and whether those organisations or groups need to be informed
- Contact the Child Protection Officer or member of Child Protection Committee to inform them of the allegations and act upon the decisions made in the discussion

All incidents should be investigated internally after any external investigation has finished, to review organisational practice and put in place any additional measures to prevent a similar thing happening again.

### **SAFE RECRUITMENT**

#### **Employees working on our projects**

##### **Employee - recruitment process**

The application of specific procedures for the recruitment staff who come into contact with children, both directly and indirectly, can reduce the likelihood of allegations of abuse being made. As a minimum, the following standards should be followed as part of the recruitment process:

- All prospective team members (paid and unpaid) who get to a final interview stage must be asked to complete an application form which asks for details of their previous employment, previous convictions and for the names of two referees. These references **MUST** be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact, for all staff. Specifically asking about any previous experience working with children where appropriate - **see our template called 'Reference and Declaration of Convictions'**
- All prospective team members (paid and unpaid) should have a Police Check completed before they start employment with us – anyone who refuses to do so should not be employed
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo) and a copy kept on file or online
- All roles that work with children should be subject to an agreed probationary period
- New members of staff should be clear about their responsibilities and where possible, work to an agreed job description
- Our Child Protection guidelines should be available to everyone and fully discussed as part of the induction process and a persons training needs identified dependant on their role

##### **Employee - Induction**

All employees should receive a formal induction during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self disclosures
- Responsibilities and expectations to be explained

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- The employee signs up to the organisation's Child Protection Policy as part of their contract - [see our template called 'Child Protection in Employee Contracts'](#)
- Child Protection Procedures are explained and training needs are identified e.g. basic child protection awareness

### Employee - Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help employees understand the Child Protection Policy. The training will include;

- Describe what is good practice and how to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and how to report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse
- How to respond to concerns expressed by a child
- How to work safely and effectively with children

### Volunteers working on our projects

#### Volunteers - Before they arrive

Checks and procedures for the arrival of volunteers who may come into contact with children, both directly and indirectly, can reduce the likelihood of allegations of abuse being made. As a minimum, the following standards are followed before a volunteer starts working on our projects;

- All volunteers must have a Police Check before they start volunteering – anyone who refuses to do so will not be booked onto any of our volunteer projects

#### Volunteers - On arrival

- Our Child Protection Policy will be available to everyone and discussed as part of the volunteer induction. A volunteers' training needs will be identified dependant on their involvement with children i.e. teaching projects will provide more information than a conservation project.
- Evidence of identity (a copy of passport) is brought to the project by the volunteer and handed to the Manager during the induction - if a copy is not brought by the volunteer, the Project Manager must ask for a copy to be taken at the expense of the volunteer
- The volunteer code of conduct will be discussed as part of their induction and as part of this it is pointed out the sections on child protection

#### Taking photos and videos on our projects

Under the children's act permission for all photography and filming must be obtained from the legal guardian.

Steps are taken at each project activity to put in place agreements for photography (so volunteers can take photographs without having to ask permission from every child). Where this is not agreed for whatever reason, this decision must be respected by all volunteers and employees. [See our example template 'Photography Release Form for Children'](#)

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### Use of premises by other organisations

In the event that a room or rooms on the premises are used by other organisations that are associated with or a partner with African Impact or The Happy Africa Foundation, the letting agreement should ensure that the hiring organisation works to approved child protection procedures and that they read and agree to abide by these guidelines.

### Templates and Tools available

<b>Child Protection Guidelines Poster</b>	A poster to put up at project locations to help people understand good and poor practice around children
<b>Child Protection - Statement</b>	A statement to be completed by anyone involved in an incident or allegation
<b>Child Protection - Incident Report</b>	A report to be completed by the Project Manager
<b>Reference and Declaration of Convictions</b>	As part of the recruitment of staff, a form to be completed by potential employees at final interview stage and before confirmation of employment
<b>Child Protection in employee contracts - to include in new staff contracts or an addendum to existing contracts</b>	A paragraph to add to new contracts or an addendum to existing contracts to include understanding of our Child Protection Policy
<b>Volunteer Code of Conduct - updated version</b>	A new version of the volunteer code of conduct that includes a statement about Child Protection
<b>Volunteer Induction - introduction to our Child Protection Policy</b>	A section to add to your existing volunteer induction to introduce the Child Protection Policy
<b>Photography release form for children</b>	A form to be signed by parents to give consent for photos of their child to be taken and used by African Impact and volunteers
<b>For volunteers - using images and videoclips</b>	A guide for volunteers to use their camera and photos at our projects in a responsible way

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