

## Child-protection Policy

### **Policy statement**

Children Believe condemns all forms of child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation. We are committed to protecting children. We are also committed to preventing and responding to abuse that may occur during the delivery of Children Believe-supported community-development and emergency-response programs.

### **What is child protection?**

All children have the right to survival, development and protection from harm and the right to participate in family, cultural and social life (Article 19 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child). Child protection at Children Believe refers to all the actions we take to prevent and respond to child abuse.

### **Defining child abuse**

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment and commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (*World Health Organization: Child maltreatment, Fact Sheet No. 150, August 2010\**).

### **Policy scope**

This policy applies to and is mandatory for our policy adherents who are defined as all Children Believe Board directors, full- and part-time staff, volunteers, interns, contractors, donors and other Children Believe representatives who may have direct contact with children or access to child information.

### **Partner organizations**

Our partners will develop, implement and adhere to their own child-protection policies, as per the signed memorandum of agreement with Children Believe, and these policies will be consistent with the scope of this policy.

### **Why we need a child-protection policy**

Children living in poverty are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. We want to build a child-safe organization where there are preventive measures to reduce risk for children.

*\*Child abuse or maltreatment includes, but is not limited to, physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, neglect, child labour, child trafficking, female genital mutilation and cutting as well as child marriage.*

### **Child-protection behaviour protocol**

All policy adherents must:

- comply with the Children Believe Child Protection Behaviour Protocol (contact Children Believe for more details), which outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours when working with children;
- avoid actions that can be perceived as child abuse, because only the actions and not the intentions are visible.

## **Recruitment**

Our recruitment procedures ensure the best possible people work with Children Believe. Those who are potential risks to children are deterred from applying and are not recruited into the organization. Criminal reference checks relevant to the level of contact with children are required and are a condition for all employment with Children Believe.

## **Training**

We are committed to increasing awareness about child protection. Personnel are trained relevant to their level of direct contact with children. All personnel are trained on reporting child-protection concerns and allegations.

## **Reporting and response procedures**

A clear reporting procedure has been established to make it quick and easy to handle arising concerns or allegations. All policy adherents, partner personnel, children and members of the community have an obligation to report witnessed or suspected child abuse within 24 hours.

## **Child sponsorship**

The child's right to privacy is important to Children Believe. The sponsorship relationship is carefully managed and child information securely stored to fulfil the child's right to privacy.

## **Consequences for non-compliance to this policy**

For all policy adherents, immediate and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including termination and criminal prosecution for violation of this policy. Partner organizations will lose our funding support and a contractor will have the contract terminated. Criminal proceedings may also be instituted against partners and contractors who violate the policy. If a donor contravenes the policy, the relationship will be terminated and appropriate action, which may include criminal proceedings, will be taken. Children Believe will report incidents to local law enforcement and child-welfare authorities.