

# **THE CHILDFUND ALLIANCE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

*Submitted and approved by ChildFund ExComm April' 08*

## **A. Statement of Purpose**

ChildFund Alliance is a network of global, child focused organizations that support children's development and well-being, and implement lasting and meaningful changes in the lives of impoverished children and families worldwide.

ChildFund Alliance is an effective global alliance, working to improve humanity by creating opportunity for the deprived, excluded and vulnerable children of the world. Operating worldwide, we strive to eradicate the root causes and the effects of poverty on children by implementing meaningful, sustainable solutions resulting in positive futures. Working together with children in need, their families and communities, we make a difference each and every day.

ChildFund's vision is of a world that respects the dignity and worth of each child; enables child participation; promotes well-being, hope, and resilience for children and families; and creates positive venues for social development. To achieve this vision, ChildFund works in close collaboration with children and strengthens family, community, and societal systems that support children's healthy development and protection amidst difficult circumstances caused by poverty, social exclusion, or humanitarian crisis.

The purpose of this document is to define ChildFund's core values and commitments to children, who in line with the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), are defined as all people under the age of 18 years. These values and commitments define ChildFund's collective identity, establish ChildFund's accountability, require adherence to the highest standards, and promote an organizational environment supportive of ChildFund's work to ensure children's well-being, rights, and protection.

The policies of members of ChildFund should be consistent with this global Child Protection Policy, which is not intended to replace members' own policies, values or rules or regulations. Each ChildFund member must have its own well defined procedures and practices for implementing this Child Protection Policy. This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated to comply with international standards and best practices for child focused agencies.

## **B. Application**

All ChildFund members and their participants: staff, contractors, volunteers, partners, members of governing bodies (i.e. Board members), and other organisational representatives (all of whom are collectively referred to hereafter as "ChildFund representatives") adhere to the common values and commitments set forth in this Child Protection Policy in their work with or through ChildFund.

This policy is meant to be used in tandem with its companion policy, the ChildFund Alliance Code of Conduct.

ChildFund sponsors, donors and other supporters are required to comply with the Child Protection Policy when interacting directly with children and beneficiary communities, for example, when visiting or communicating with sponsored children

### **C. Core Values**

ChildFund members adopt the following values in regard to children.

***Dignity and worth of every child:*** We facilitate the creation of a safe environment that promotes the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of ethnicity, race, color, language, religion, opinion, gender, origins, birth status, ability, or belonging to a particular group.

***Children's right to participate:*** We recognize that children are active and competent contributors to their own development with the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives in accordance with their development or evolving capacities.

***Empowerment:*** We encourage the empowerment of children to develop capacities for self-protection and advocate on their own behalf for issues that concern them.

***Respect for children's rights:*** We promote the four core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): non-discrimination; the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.

### **D. Core Commitments**

This policy commits ChildFund members to the promotion of children's rights, the creation of safe, protective environments for children and the prevention of all forms of child abuse, exploitation, harm and neglect.

To ensure the highest standard of protection for children, ChildFund commits to work proactively to promote children's safety, their common and equal rights, and their rights to participate.

ChildFund specifically prohibits its representatives from the following:

#### **Discrimination**

***Definition:*** Discrimination consists of unequal treatment of children based on personal or group characteristics. There are many forms of discrimination based on characteristics such as, but not limited to:

## Religion

Religious discrimination is defined as treating a child less favorably than another on grounds of his or her religion or belief, or lack thereof.

## Ethnicity

Ethnic discrimination entails negative or degrading treatment on the basis of one's ethnicity (racial, cultural, national or tribal background).

## Gender

Gender refers to the social differences between males and females. Gender discrimination occurs when either males or females are privileged over the other group. In most societies, gender discrimination entails the privileging of males over females, who are denied equal power, status, access, and rights.

## Language

Language discrimination occurs when a child is treated differently and/or negatively for the way he/she speaks or the language he/she uses to communicate.

## Disability,

Disability discrimination occurs when a child with physical, emotional, social or communicative impairment is denied equal right to education, health care, birth registration or recognition of legal capacity.

### *Commitments:*

- ChildFund prohibits discrimination against children on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, gender, language, or any other characteristic
- ChildFund supports religious, language and ethnic diversity and tolerance amongst its representatives and beneficiaries.
- ChildFund creates environments that protect and enhance the rights and opportunities for persons with disability in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

## **Harassment**

*Definition:* Harassment consists of inappropriate comments; behavior that is offensive, demeaning, intimidating, or physically harmful. It may include physical harassment (assaults, impeding or blocking movement), unwanted attention or verbal harassment (labeling or use of nickname.) Harassment can be relative to race, ancestry, place of origin, color, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, record of offence, marital status, family status or abilities status.

### *Commitments:*

- ChildFund prohibits all kinds of harassment of children by its representatives.
- ChildFund will endeavour to maintain an environment that supports the dignity and self esteem of all children it reaches through its representatives.

## **Sexual Harassment**

*Definition:* Sexual harassment in regard to children is defined as conduct of a sexual nature. It includes, but is not limited to comments, leering, sexually suggestive gestures, or visual displays or degrading jokes of a sexual nature.

*Commitment:*

- ChildFund prohibits expressly sexual behavior and behavior that is sexually suggestive or oriented towards children.

## **Sexual Exploitation**

*Definition:* Sexual exploitation is the abuse of power to entice or coerce others into sexual activity, exercised on a child by an adult or a child upon another child. It includes, but is not limited to, prostitution of children, sexual abuse, child pornography and forms of transactional sex wherein a child is coerced into sexual activities to obtain access to necessities such as food, shelter or education.

*Commitments:*

- ChildFund prohibits sexual activity between its representatives and children (people under the age of 18 years) regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- ChildFund prohibits exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex with children, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to children and/or their families.

## **Exploitation**

*Definition:* Exploitation is the abuse of power by coercing or leading children into activities or situations that humiliate and violate their rights. It includes but is not limited to all forms of child trafficking (selling or buying children for economic gain or in any way supporting such practices), hazardous forms of child labor or recruitment or use of children in armed forces or groups.

*Commitment:*

- ChildFund prohibits exploitation of children in any way or form

## **Neglect**

*Definition:* Neglect of a child occurs when there is a recurring failure to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk. It also includes abandonment and withholding of necessary medical treatment.

*Commitment:*

- ChildFund facilitates the provision of basic needs and care for children to realize their full development potential
- ChildFund prohibits neglect of children and endeavors to provide appropriate care and to meet basic needs for children through its representatives.

**Abuse**

*Definition:* Abuse involves a sustained pattern of verbal, physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment that result in damage to the child's health and/or psychological development. It can take the form of threatening, ridiculing, ignoring or isolating the child. It may also include exposure to violence such as when a child witnesses domestic violence or is directly exposed to family violence civil violence, or armed conflict.

*Commitment:*

- ChildFund prohibits all forms of abuse of children and endeavors to maintain a positive environment for healthy child development.

**E. Reporting**

All ChildFund representatives are obligated to report violations of this Policy in accordance with procedures established by their respective member organization and as required by local law.