



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF STC

STAND TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

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OVERVIEW

Stand Together for Change understand that the organizations those working with children have a moral and legal responsibility to protect children within their care. In our case working with children with disabilities it is important for us to have a clear child protection and policy in place. The policy should have necessary information about protection issues and standardized procedures to address such issues in order to guide the organization to ensure giving a better protection environment to the children.

A comprehensive policy guideline can help all to response and react appropriately and positive manner to address the issue if arises any point of time. As an organization working for the rights of children, it is our responsibility to ensure that child rights are respected and by policy and practice they are in place. This policy document would provide a guideline to STC to protect children from any form of deliberate abuse within organizations. Therefore, the child protection policy would help to create a child safe organization where children feel safe, can speak out, are listened to and where children and staff are respected and empowered. Thus CHILD PROTECTION POLICY is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safe guard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to ensure that the organization is taking its duty of care seriously.



GLOSSARY- TERMS AND DEFINATIONS

WHO IS A CHILD

According to UN Convention on the Rights of the child (Article1) a child is every human being below the age of 18 years.

WHAT IS CHILD PROTECTION?

Child protection is a broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of organizations and individuals associated with the organizations towards children in their care.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child constitutes all forms of physical and /or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or 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, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents (WHO, 1999)

- Depression or poor self-image
- Self-destructive or suicidal behavior
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Anti-social behavior
- Fear of adults
- Problems in school
- Unexplained burns, cuts, bruises or welts in the shape of an object

WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE:

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give between a child and adult or another child who by age or

development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.

This may include but is not limited to the inducement or coercion of the child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials

HOW CHILDREN WILL IDENTITY THAT S/HE IS BEING ABUSED:

INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Fondling, touching or kissing a child's private parts
- Making the child fondle the adult's private parts
- Penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex, anal sex
- Showing sex organs to a child
- Forced observation of sexual acts
- Showing pornographic material
- Forcing the child to undress
- Spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:

- Seductiveness
- Avoidance of things related to sexuality
- Rejection of own genitals or bodies
- Nightmares and bedwetting
- Drastic changes in appetite
- Over compliance or excessive aggression
- Fear of a particular person
- Withdrawal, secretiveness or depression
- Suicidal behavior
- Eating disorders
- Self-injury

Sometimes there are no obvious physical signs of abuse and a physician must examine the child to confirm the abuse.

WHAT MAKES PHYSICAL ABUSE?

- Beating, whipping, punching, slapping or hitting
- Burning with cigarettes
- Scalding hot objects
- Severe physical punishment

Corporal (physical) punishment is distinguished from physical abuse in that, physical punishment is the use of physical abuse is an injury that results from physical aggression. However, physical punishment easily gets out of control and can become physical abuse.

FORMS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

- Lack of affection
- Lack of praise or positive reinforcement
- Negative comparisons
- Belittling; telling the child that he or she is “of no good” “worthless”
- Using derogatory terms to describe the child
- Habitual scape-goating or blaming
- Using extreme or bizarre forms of punishment such as confinement to a closet or dark room, tying to a chair for long periods of time

What is Empathy: identification with and understanding of another’s situation, feeling and motives.

Who is a Staff Member: contractual staff, general assignment short or long term on salary, Staff trainee/in probation, Paid Volunteers

Staff: A staff is known to be contractual staff when an agreement is made between STC on one part and the employee on the other part for a specified period

Volunteer: volunteers work with STC at various community level voluntarily and do not claim for payments of salary or wage

Donors: any individual or agency contributing to the organization’s resources in cash or in kind for a specific period of time. Prior to their contribution there is a planning stage where both the donor and recipient play an active role. There are time individual donors donates without

planning, but STC keeps plans for each of the donations it receives. The recipient is accountable to the donor and they work in partnership.

Interns: as a part of the academic curriculum, students coming from different institutes for a specific period of time with the objective of practical learning through completion of the specific assignment given to them by the organization.

Visitors: an individual or group who visits the organization for a short span of time with the purpose to understand the organization's work or for queries /inquiries

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Child Protection Policy, hereafter referred to as CPP will encompass all offices, children and staff of all nature, volunteers of all nature of stc, visitors, donors or parents coming in direct or indirect contact with children.

Stand Together for Change is committed to the safety, security and well-being of children with disabilities within its care and control. Claims of inappropriate behavior and abuse are taken seriously and STC will report any suspicions, witnessed incidents or disclosures of abuse to Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) or Rwanda national Police, STC shall be provided with a safe and secure environment, free from inappropriate behavior and abuse. Key principles of Child Protection in STC:

- The safety, security and well-being of child with disabilities and their best interests are fundamental responsibilities of staff and affiliates.
- Children have a right to a continuous learning environment in which they can flourish.
- Children shall be provided with a safe, nurturing and respectful learning environment, free from any inappropriate behavior or abuse.
- Children are provided with preventive and supportive services.
- Interactions with children are transparent

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Stand Together for Change has based policies and procedures on:

- A shared understanding by staff and affiliates of what constitutes child abuse, in all forms, and how to recognize, respond to and prevent it.
- Staff and affiliate training to equip staff and affiliates to recognize situations of potential child abuse and inappropriate behavior and know the response that is expected of them in these situations.
- Clear lines of communication, authority and decision-making to ensure staff and affiliates have well defined procedures and a consistent approach for handling any child protection issues.
- Regular review of the effectiveness of policies and procedures whereby STC assesses if any adjustments, additions or improvements are required.
- Openness about the work at STC and how it is conducted. STC maintains an environment where child abuse/inappropriate behavior and protection matters can be raised and addressed.
- Equity and fairness ensuring that all concerns at all levels of authority are addressed through a consistent and transparent process.
- Dignity and respect by keeping personal information confidential, and only sharing it when required.
- Coordination with other organizations that can assist with child protection matters. This can include Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB)/ Police and local authorities.

GUIDELINES TO LIMIT POTENTIAL ABUSE

STC has various practices in place in its daily operations to limit the potential for abuse and inappropriate behavior. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- One-on-one child interactions are discouraged, unless required under the scope of job duties or at the request of a child.
- Training is provided during the orientation and onboarding process of new employees;
- Ongoing training is provided as it relates to Child Abuse or Protection;
- Ensuring all practices reflect care and concern for the child's well-being and dignity;
- Children are advised, in advance, that if they feel uncomfortable in their dealings with any staff or other children, to discuss their concerns with a trusted adult within STC
- When possible, children are taught about personal boundaries and inappropriate behavior, and the importance of reporting when they witness or experience behavior that makes them uncomfortable.

REPORTING GUIDELINES

The law states that certain people must report their concerns if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been, or is being abused or is neglected/ discriminated. Certain members of the community are bound by law as mandated notifies, however child protection is a community responsibility and any person can report suspected child abuse to the Child Abuse District officer.

If the alleged offender is a member, volunteer or staff member of STC, the organization will immediately advise the alleged offender in writing that a report has been made that involves them and that he/she is suspended from all STC activities until the matter is investigated by the appropriate authorities. This action is procedural policy, and not an indication or implication of guilt or otherwise of any person reported upon. Accordingly, if an allegation is made against STC member, that person will be stood-down until the matter is finalized to the satisfaction of STC staff members

It is important that no details of the report be communicated to the alleged offender. This must be left to the authorities. If allegations are substantiated, the accused person will be

immediately dismissed from the organization and make sure that he/she will not be admitted again.

Regardless of any legal outcome, STC reserves the right to refuse reinstatement to any volunteer or staff member at its sole discretion.

RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT

Adults often worry that they may be overreacting and misreading a situation, and this may cause them to minimize concerning behavior they witness or hear about, particularly if the situation involves a child/child interaction. There is also often a fear of damaging a working relationship by raising a concern about a work colleague. It can be hard to believe that a colleague, a youth, or someone met through work duties could harm a child, and it can be tempting to downplay a transgression in the hopes it will not be repeated. These behaviors cannot be ignored, and any concerns are to be immediately raised as per Reporting Procedures

FAILURE TO REPORT

Failure to report by any professional or STC member and affiliates can result in four serious consequences:

- The child will not receive the protection required and/or may sustain further abuse.
- The abusive situation is likely to continue to deteriorate, putting the child (and any siblings) at further risk.
- The professional/staff member and affiliates could face both legal and professional/occupational penalties
- The professional/staff member and affiliates may face RIB/Police.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

The following procedures outline the process for reporting suspicions, witnessed incidents, and disclosures of inappropriate behavior and/or abuse.

- If the child is in immediate danger, call the RIB/Police

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the immediate safety of the child. Attempt to stop or interrupt the behavior or situation causing concern, to the extent in which it does not unreasonably jeopardize the safety of anyone, especially the child. Steps taken will vary depending upon the situation and the safety concerns that may be applicable.

DISCLOSURE ADVICE GUIDELINES

The following guidelines provide assistance to an individual when speaking with a child regarding a disclosure:

- **Be sensitive:** When talking to the child, be sensitive to their needs. The primary role is to support the child, gather basic information and report it to RIB/Police immediately.
- **Stay calm and listen:** An abused child needs to know that STC staff and members are composed and available to help. Reacting with shock, outrage or fear might inhibit the child and make them feel more anxious or ashamed. A calm response supports the child by allowing them to speak about what has happened. It also provides some reassurance that what the child is experiencing, or has experienced, can be talked about and worked through together.
- **Go slowly:** It is normal to feel inadequate or unsure about what to do or say when a child discloses incidents of abuse. Do not let this discomfort rush into asking questions.
- **Get only the essential facts:** Limit the discussion to finding out generally what took place. Do not probe for details. If general information is needed, ask how, when, who and what questions. Avoid using why questions as they can indirectly suggest that the child may have done something wrong and increase reluctance to discuss the matter. Once enough information has been gathered and there is reason to believe that abuse is occurring, or has occurred, stop gathering facts and be supportive.
- **Be supportive:** Reassure the child that they have not done anything wrong. Children need support and reassurance when disclosing abuse. It is helpful to let the child know that:
 - The child is not in trouble.

- The child is doing the right thing in speaking about this.
 - Everything will be done to make sure they get the help they need.
 - There are others who can be trusted to help solve this problem.
- **Tell the child what will happen next:** Children who disclose their abuse feel anxious and vulnerable about what people think of them and what will happen next.

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

The following procedure must be adhered to when recruiting volunteers / employing staff:

- All personnel will be given a formal interview
- New employees and volunteers will sign a Prohibited Persons Declaration
- An individual will be barred from working with children if they have prior convictions relating to violent or sexually related offences
- Reporting of reasonable suspicions of abuse will be reported to the authorities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**STAND TOGETHER FOR CHANGE CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES
AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the contents of the Child Protection Policies Manual procedures and code of conducts of **STAND TOGETHER FOR CHANGE**. I understand the immediate requirements to report any suspected, witnessed or disclosed acts of abuse, and that failure to do so places the child at further risk. I further understand that **STAND TOGETHER FOR CHANGE** reserves the right to change and/or amend any part of this policy as required.

I agree to work upon the guidelines and procedures outlined in STC, in their entirety, and understand that if I violate the rules set, I may face corrective action up to and including termination of employment. Furthermore, I understand that I may also face legal and criminal action if found to have caused a child to be in need of protection.

Signed by:

NAME.....

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....



DECLARATION OF COMPLIANCE OF CHILDREN PROTECTION POLICY

I am hereby declaring that I have gone through the STC Child Protection Policies and agree to comply by its values and code of conducts.

STAND TOGETHER FOR CHANGE would have full authority to take action as per the policy of STC for any violation of the policy/ code of conducts, if found during my services with STAND TOGETHER FOR.

NAME.....

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....



DECLARATION OF COMPLIANCE OF NON CONVICTION

I am hereby declaring that I have never been convicted or never had any enquiry reported against me for any criminal cases and particularly of violating child protections issues

[i.e. child abuse of any form]

To my best of knowledge, I am giving the above statement and is responsible for the same for its truthfulness.

NAME.....

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

