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Child Protection Policy – towards a “child safe” environment The “Rights” Way ...

Purpose

Children are at the heart of CCDT’s programs. We believe that all children have rights and consider the UNCRC as a guiding instrument in our understanding of rights. However, we will strive to move beyond the UNCRC in our attempt to ensure that children’s dignity is upheld and they have every opportunity for development. We are committed to promoting the rights of children including their right to be protected from harm, neglect, abuse and exploitation.

The purpose of CCDT’s Child Protection Policy is to ensure the safety of all children who we work with/for and with whom we cross paths in the course of our interactions and interventions. It is to make clear to all in the organization and our associates, communities we work with and those who come in contact with us, CCDT’s principle of zero tolerance to child abuse in any form. The aim of this policy is to ensure the rights to protection of a child are safeguarded and realized in entirety and to assist staff and associates to take proactive action to address specific child protection issues.

A. CCDT’s vision for child protection

Vision

CCDT’s vision statement – “A world where every child counts; a world of children living in dignity” speaks of our commitment to and recognition of children as individuals who need to be respected. We believe the wellbeing of the child is paramount and that it can be guaranteed only within the realm of safe spaces and environment. We aim to create ‘child safe’ environments, both within and outside the organization, where the wellbeing of the child is safeguarded and promoted, where the vulnerabilities are minimized and children’s capacity to protect themselves are strengthened. We aim to create an environment conducive to the recognition of children as individuals who are active in their own protection and development and where adults meet and respect their protection and nurturing responsibilities.

Statement of Responsibility

By this policy, CCDT affirms its commitment to safeguarding the wellbeing of children and ensuring child rights to protection are fully realized. We reaffirm our responsibility to promote child safe practices and systems to ensure the rights of children under our care and in our contact are safeguarded in every possible manner and children are protected from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. We shall actively work towards preventing abuse and responding to instances of abuse that we encounter. We shall institute policies, systems, practices and guidelines that ensure accountability with regard to child safety and protection within the organization and in the larger domain of our work. We shall not work or associate with any person who exploits or abuses a child abuser in any way and shall proactively work towards bringing any abuser to justice. Our associates will be required to abide by our standards of child protection in their dealings and programs. Our decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of ‘the best interests of the child’.



Definitions under the Child Protection Policy

1. **A child** is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.
2. **Child Abuse** is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any action that results in actual or potential harm to a child.
3. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages her/his prospects of safe and healthy development into adulthood.
4. **Child Protection**, within the scope of this policy, is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that CCDT undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

C. Scope of the Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection Policy applies to everyone working for or associated with CCDT. It encompasses the whole of CCDT and includes without limitation:

1. **Staff at all levels** – the field and Headquarters.
2. **CCDT Associates** – these include board members (Board of Trustees), volunteers, community volunteers, sponsors, consultants and contractors. It also includes such staff and/or representatives of partner organizations and governments who have been brought into contact with children or are party to CCDT child sensitive data while working for or with CCDT.
3. **CCDT Visitors** – (e.g. donors, journalists, media, researchers, celebrities etc) who may come into contact with children through CCDT are also bound by this policy.

D. Responsibilities under the Child Protection Policy

CCDT Staff, Associates and Visitors must:

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/ behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.
2. Never develop relationships with children which could in any manner be considered exploitative or abusive.
3. Abide by the principle of avoiding action and behavior that may constitute poor practice and can be considered abusive.
4. Not employ children below the age of 18 years.
5. Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these.
6. Report any child abuse and protection concerns they have in accordance with applicable office procedures.

Signature



7. Respond to a child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local office procedures.
8. Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
9. Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
10. Always ask permission from children (or, in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before taking images (e.g. photographs, videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Ensure that any images taken of children are respectful (For example: children should have adequate clothing that covers up the sexual organs. Images of children in sexually suggestive poses or that in any way impact negatively on their dignity or privacy are not acceptable). Stories and images of children should be based on the child's best interest. Be aware that where concerns exist about the conduct of Staff or Associates in relation to child protection and/or where there has been a breach of the Child Protection Policy, this will be investigated under this policy either: by consideration of referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under the law of the country; and/or by CCDT in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary sanctions and/or dismissal for Staff. Where an incident is alleged to have occurred, the alleged perpetrator will be prohibited from all contact with the child until the matter is resolved.

Be aware that CCDT will sever all relations with any CCDT Associate or Visitor who is proven to have committed child abuse.

11. Be aware that, if a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, any employee who makes false and malicious accusations will face disciplinary action.

Be aware that CCDT will take appropriate legal or other action against CCDT Associates and Visitors who make false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

CCDT Staff must:

12. Undergo thorough induction and ongoing training programs to be updated on CCDT's policies and practices and be kept abreast of current standards in child protection.
13. Never disclose information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public unless that disclosure is in accordance with standard CCDT policies and procedures.
14. Ensure an enabling environment where children, staff and associates feel comfortable to raise and discuss issues and concerns.
15. Ensure absolute accountability exists between staff so potentially abusive behavior is recognized and corrective and/or penal action taken.
16. Inform children of their rights and build their capacity to identify and address issues and concerns.



CCDT Associates and Visitors must not:

17. Disclose information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public without explicit consent from CCDT.

CCDT will:

18. Ensure no member of staff employs children below the age of 18 years. It will not partner with organizations employing children below the age of 18 years.
19. Ensure all its contracts have clauses stipulating zero tolerance towards any form of child abuse and/or exploitation.
20. Undertake to build awareness on and sensitize all its stakeholders and communities it works with on child protection.
21. Work towards ensuring mechanism exists in the community to prevent and report instances of child abuse and/or exploitation and violation of child rights.

E. Personal Conduct outside Work

We are committed to ensuring that our Staff and representatives apply high standards of behavior towards children within both their professional and their private lives. While it does not attempt to influence the value systems by which its employees conduct their personal lives, CCDT believes that the latter has a bearing on the culture of the organization. As a result, it remains firm and uncompromising on its insistence on core values and principles being internalized by its employees which guide their conduct in their personal lives. Principal among these core values is CCDT's commitment to child safety, protection and development. Any unlawful or other conduct by CCDT employees which jeopardizes the organisation's core values, principles and position during or after business hours will not be permitted. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to: any unlawful activity related to sexual abuse; any other unlawful activity; sexual harassment; physically/verbally abusive behavior; and public disorderly conduct.

Staff and Associates are required to bear in mind the principles of the Child Protection Policy and heighten their awareness of how their behavior may be perceived both at work and outside work.

This policy has been adopted with minor modifications from Plan India's "Child Protection Policy". We acknowledge, with gratitude, Plan India's contribution to our efforts towards instituting on paper CCDT's "Child Protection Policy". It is due to note here that the spirit of Child Protection and the UNCRC has always guided our actions and approach even when the policy was not inked on paper. Having this now as an approved policy is one of the many tiny but commendable steps in our long journey in building "a world where every child counts; a world of children living in dignity".

This policy has been viewed and approved by Ms. Sara Lizia D'Mello, Managing Trustee, CCDT

Sara D'Mello
Managing Trustee