



# **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND STANDARDS**

**July, 2018**

**CHARD CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND STANDARDS  
AS OF (DATE July 05 2018)**

## **PURPOSE**

CHARD continually examines itself to ensure that everything reasonably possible is done to reduce the risk to sponsored and non-sponsored children in CHARD projects from any form of abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse.

CHARD requires these standards in the development, implementation, and monitoring of child protection policies within all its offices. These standards seek to prevent harm to children in CHARD programs.

This Child Protection Policy and Standards is drawn in line with the Republic of South Sudan Child Act, 2009.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**“Personnel”** means all CHARD staff, board/advisory board members and on-going volunteers/interns.

**“Volunteers”** mean A) those volunteers working directly with children or B) those who volunteer in any capacity for more than one month.

**“Minor” and “Child”** mean a person under the age of 18 years.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

CHARD program team is responsible for ensuring that the child protection policies and standards are implemented and consistent with the requirements set forth in South Sudan Child Act and must include plans and/or procedures to address the following issues:

### **Awareness Raising**

The majority of sexual abuse takes place within the family and community. However, organizations like CHARD are increasingly exposed to persons outside the community who seek access to children for sexual and other exploitive purposes. Awareness raising provides education for staff, board members and volunteers in the definition of exploitation and abuse and neglect, and includes indicators of paedophilia (defined as a preference for sexual activity with a child) and sexual abuse in the local context.

All staff, board/advisory members and volunteers are required to acknowledge in writing receipt and understanding of CHARD Child Protection Policies and Required Standards. They are to be kept informed of policy changes as they arise.

CHARD commit to awareness raising among its sponsors and donors of issues related to exploitation of children and measures being taken to protect them.

CHARD entering into agreements with partner organizations to provide services to children should require assurance that child protection policies and procedures are in place. When entering into other partnership agreements, CHARD will encourage the adoption of Child Protection Policies, acknowledging that the lack of such policies can place children, CHARD, and other organizations at risk.

### **Program Planning**

An assessment of the circumstances of children is incorporated into all CHARD surveys and research conducted prior to the initiation of any program. Where relevant, such assessments include plans to work with communities to reduce risks facing vulnerable children and to address the needs of children who are in situations of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

As CHARD becomes aware of applicable information on community resources and support services for vulnerable, abused or exploited children, information will be provided to project personnel.

Program plans promote the prevention of child abuse, exploitation and neglect. Where relevant, CHARD explores the causes of child abuse, exploitation and neglect, and implements responses to support family and community responsibility for the well being of children. Plans for rehabilitation of children who have been abused and exploited are developed in the best interests of the child by enhancing and maintaining safety and security, and reducing the risk of further harm.

Children are considered active participants in child protection programs. Children's hopes, aspirations and God-given uniqueness are respected in program development. Programs designed to protect children include mechanisms to give them a voice and skills for protecting themselves. However, the responsibility for protection of children lies with adults. Children should not be expected to make adult decisions.

#### **Personnel - Recruiting and Screening**

Employees, board of director/advisory candidates, volunteers/interns are informed of CHARD's Child Protection Policy and Standards. Policies and standards are reviewed during orientation.

Basic screening of applicants for employment includes a written application, personal interviews and reference checks. During the interview process, applicants should be asked about previous work with children.

Where possible and permissible by local law, applicants for positions as a CHARD staff member, Board/advisory member or volunteer/intern may be requested to give permission for a criminal record or police background check for any conviction related to abuse of children. Permission can be obtained through a standard Waiver and Consent Form. If such checks are instituted, candidates are informed at the time of interview that hiring will be contingent on a record check.

The same requirement for background checks, where possible and permissible by law, also applies to existing CHARD staff members, board members and volunteers/interns.

Individuals, who are hired as independent contractors by CHARD field programs, are notified of CHARD's Child Protection Policy and Standards and are made aware that they are expected to follow behavior protocols set out below.

In the best interests of children, CHARD may not hire anyone with a prior conviction for child abuse, paedophilia or related offenses.

### **Code of Conduct**

CHARD Code of Conduct are rules of appropriate and proper behavior. All CHARD personnel are required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the Code of Conduct. These codes are designed to protect children but are also intended to protect staff from false accusations of inappropriate behaviour or abuse. In addition to requirements reflecting local sensitivities, the following basic codes should be included in the Child Protection Policies:

CHARD personnel should avoid being alone or staying overnight with a child where others cannot witness their behavior. Family members or legal guardians excepted;

CHARD personnel should not hire minors as 'house help' in their homes. Even though providing employment for a minor may be culturally acceptable and provide benefits not otherwise available to the child, the hiring of minors may lead to misunderstandings and is inconsistent with CHARD's efforts to ban exploitative child labor.

CHARD personnel must not fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch minors in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way. To avoid misunderstanding, it is recommended that a child be asked for permission before touching or holding hands.

Where possible and practical, the 'two-adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where minors or children are involved and are present at all times, should be followed. If this is not possible, CHARD staff members are encouraged to look for alternatives such as being accompanied by community members on visits to children.

CHARD personnel need to be aware that they may work with children who, because of the circumstances and abuses they have experienced, may use a relationship to obtain 'special attention.' The adult is always considered responsible even if a child behaves seductively. Adults should avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position.

Inappropriate behavior toward children, including failure to follow CHARD Code of Conduct or sexual abuse of a child is grounds for discipline which may include dismissal from employment, volunteer/internship, or board/advisory membership.

CHARD personnel must be concerned about perception and appearance in their language, actions and relationships with minors and children.

### **Allegation/Incident Management Plan**

#### **Reporting and Response**

Effective reporting procedures and plans for handling allegations of misconduct enhances efforts to protect children from abuse.

The Executive Director(ED) and Head of Programs are responsible for developing a reporting procedure and response plan for handling any allegation or suspicion of misconduct toward children. Child abusers are not likely to remain in an environment where workers are trained to report suspicious behaviour. Child abusers thrive on secrecy and are more likely to commit an abusive act when they are unnoticed, or when they are in an environment in which others are naive and insensitive to the possibility of child abuse. A reporting plan is not limited to but must include the following:

Clearly identified procedures for reporting any knowledge or suspicion that a child has been molested or that inappropriate behavior has occurred or is occurring;

Procedures for reporting according to mandated laws. In some instances, police may carry out an investigation. Any interference with this process could have legal implications for staff and for CHARD;

A plan for conducting an in-house investigation which ensures that a child is not held responsible, unless the facts indicate otherwise. The investigation must be treated with care and concern, particularly as a child may fear retribution and punishment while a staff member accused of child abuse will be concerned for his or her privacy and legal rights;

A plan for responding to the results of an investigation that includes consideration for the welfare of the child. The corrective action policy of the office concerned should be taken into consideration with regard to the person accused;

A plan for dealing with media inquiries that includes a designated spokesperson; and,

A plan for reporting incidents confidentially to the ED. On being informed of an incident, the ED confidentially monitors and reviews the response and outcome for the purpose of revising and refining child protection measures. (NOTE: Incidents involving a CHARD employee may result in an internal investigation by CHARD and corrective action per the corrective action process. Incidents involving child sponsors are included under this provision.)

Information about a child protection incident is shared with people on a ‘right’ and ‘need to know’ basis as deemed necessary by CHARD. Names and identities are not to be disclosed outside the group designated as ‘need to know’ unless cleared by the appropriate CHARD personnel.

### **Suspected Child Abuse**

In the event of an incident of suspected child abuse, the ED immediately puts into effect internal reporting steps, seeks instructions, reports to authorities as required and also gives due regard to the appropriateness of informing the law and judicial mechanisms where this is not a requirement. If an expatriate is suspected, due regard must be given to the potential for extraterritorial proceedings by the expatriate’s country of origin.

### **Other Reporting Situations**

Any person who has knowledge of a potential child protection issue involving CHARD should immediately contact the ED.

### **Response to Findings and Concluding an Investigation**

The welfare of a child is of prime importance to CHARD. If sexual abuse is proven or suspected, every effort is made to assist the child in coping with any trauma or guilt he or she may be experiencing. This may include psychological counselling or another form of assistance deemed necessary and appropriate.

A review of the facts uncovered during the investigation to determine what actually happened, followed by a consultative decision-making process about the future of the employee involved. If the decision is to terminate employment, the employee will have the findings of the investigation shared with him or her.

Generally, personnel accused of sexual abuse of a child should be temporarily suspended during the course of the investigation. The person accused should be informed that charges have been made against him or her and given an opportunity to respond.

Furthermore, as a result of these charges, CHARD has an obligation to initiate an internal investigation. The person being investigated is encouraged to participate in the investigation by providing information and the names of witnesses to be interviewed. At the conclusion of the investigation, the suspended person should be informed in writing of the results of the investigation and what corrective action, if any, will be taken.

An effort is made to provide assistance to an employee accused of misconduct with children, including appropriate counselling and support.

In the event an allegation is proven to be untrue, or even fabricated, appropriate steps are taken for follow-up with the person who has been accused, the child, and the person who did the reporting.

Should an investigation be initiated, all information concerning the incident and investigation is documented in writing.

In the event an employee is discharged for suspected sexual abuse, CHARD may disclose such information if requested by a prospective employer. Such disclosures are made in accordance with applicable law and/or customs.

### **Communications about Children**

Communications about children should use pictures that are decent and respectful, not presenting them as victims. Children should be adequately clothed. Poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive should be avoided. Language that implies a relationship of power over children should also be avoided.

In the case of sponsored children, CHARD seeks permission to use images of the

sponsored child. This permission should be in writing and may be part of the sponsorship application.

Child personal and physical information that could be used to identify the location of a child should not be used on CHARD web sites or in any other form of communication about a child.