

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Preamble

The abuse of children and other vulnerable groups occurs in all countries and societies, through the misuse of power to the detriment of children. It is nearly always preventable.

All forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children are unacceptable. Tiritose Sustainable Travel (Herein referred to as Tiritose) accepts that steps must be taken to protect children from those adults who might seek to gain trust and access to young children through our work. The possibility of child abuse occurring is one, which we take seriously and are committed to working to prevent.

Child protection is a corporate and an Individual responsibility. Staff should be made familiar with the need for a child protection concern in all programmes and experiences. Associations with anyone found to be engaging in abusive and exploitative relationships with children will be broken.

The guiding principle of this policy is that the protection of children is always the overriding consideration in all action by staff.

The Child Protection Policy and code of conduct is a statement of the expectations Tiritose has of its workers and travellers when they come into contact with children.

Tiritose will endeavour to ensure all staff and travellers:

- Are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children
- Are aware of and are committed to the policies and procedures set out in this policy document
- Safeguard children from abuse through following a Code of Conduct
- Report where possible breaches in the Code of Conduct

- Respond appropriately when the Code of Conduct is breached

Tiritose is aware that this policy may mean some restrictions on the traditionally non-abusive relationships that staff have had with children in the past. We simply ask that staff, travellers and partners are aware of the Code of Conduct, be especially careful to avoid breaking it, and are able to respond to concerns if they do.

2. Our Expectations

A '*duty of care*' exists for all stakeholders who come into contact with children. This means they should not only apply the principles of good practice in their work but also that they have a responsibility and a legal duty to ensure the protection and safety of children in their care.

In our operations Tiritose will:

- Strive to understand children within the local context in which they live
- Work with children in a spirit of co-operation and partnership based on mutual trust and respect
- Work with children in ways which enhance their capacities and capabilities and develop their potential
- Treat children with respect and recognise them as individuals in their own right
- Regard children positively and value them as individuals with specific needs and rights
- Value the views of children and take them seriously

3. Our Values and Beliefs

Tiritose believes in the rights of children to:

- Be listened to and have their views given careful consideration
- Be encouraged and helped to participate in decisions which affect them
- Have their welfare and development promoted and safeguarded so that they can achieve their full potential
- Be considered players in their own development with health, safety, well-being and their best interests considered of paramount importance
- Be valued, respected and understood within the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity

- Have their needs identified and met within the context of the family wherever possible

4. Our Commitment

We recognise:

- The rights of the child to protection from harm, abuse, and exploitation as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The rights of Tiritose staff, travellers, governance, partner organisations and other stakeholders to training and support
- The importance of working in partnership with other organisations in the protection of children



PART A

Why The Policy?

To protect children

- Children are vulnerable and have a right to be protected, thus Tiritose seeks to ensure the protection from exploitation and abuse of all children that benefit from the various programmes being implemented by the company.

To protect staff and travellers

- All Tiritose staff and travellers have contact with children. This policy will, thus, give guidelines on how they can conduct themselves when working with children.
- In this policy, the organisation outlines the potential areas of abuse within the work done by the organisation. This will help staff to be conscious of areas that they need to be particularly vigilant in when in contact with children.

To protect the organisation

- This policy shows the commitment that the organisation has to the well-being of children. It deters potential abusers from joining the company.
- It gives procedures to be followed should allegations of abuse arise as failure to have these can undermine the work of the organisation.

What do we mean by Child Protection?

- This is protecting children from intentional and unintentional harm within the company, and our partner network, intended for their benefit. This is based on the premise that benefiting from the company is a right and not a favour to the children.

Who does the policy apply to?

- This policy has been endorsed by The Board of Tiritose and applies to all staff who represent the organisation.

Requirements of this Policy

During staff recruitment, selection and training, Tiritose will ensure that:

- The Child Protection Policy and practice will be articulated clearly on the website, at recruitment events and on application materials
- All prospective workers will be asked to sign a **declaration of criminal convictions** as part of the application process
- For all worker, volunteer and intern applicants three references will be sought including a reliable character reference. Particular attention will be given to any area of concern relating to child protection. During the interview process applicants will be asked about previous work with children
- All workers will receive training about Tiritose's Child Protection Policy. They will be given a copy of the Policy and the Code of Conduct and will be required to sign a declaration that they have received and understood them
- Tiritose staff are vigilant for signs of behavioural patterns in applicants that may be of concern, and are systematic in exploring these
- Tiritose's Handbook for Workers contains a clearly identifiable section detailing Child Protection Policy and Practice

PART B

Who is a child?

In Zimbabwe, a child is any person below the age of 18. The age of the child determines whether the act is child abuse or not. However, we have in Zimbabwe sexual acts on children, which are sexual abuse if the child is under the age of 18 years.

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse is behaviour directed towards children that results in harm, injury, or that seriously interferes with normal child development. Child abuse has nothing to do with the child having agreed to the act. In all acts that are classified as child abuse, it is considered that a child is not mature enough to negotiate and decide what is in their best interest. They are said to be unable to legally consent to things that involve persons older than them.

Our definition of child abuse assumes a definition of the child. Tiritose defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 years. This is consistent with the definition used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Within the broad category of child abuse there are five **subtypes of abuse** that are distinguished. These subtypes and their definitions were devised following an extensive review of different countries' definitions of child maltreatment and a 1999 WHO consultation on child abuse prevention.

Subtypes/Forms of abuse

Physical abuse

Definition of physical abuse

- Physical abuse is the non-accidental physical injury of a child, or any physical action that hurts, injures or generally inflicts physical pain to a child. This includes the following;
- Whipping
- Hitting with hard objects

- Knocking or pushing against hard objects/surfaces
- Punching and slapping
- Unauthorised canning (corporal punishment)

Emotional abuse

Definition of emotional abuse

- Emotional abuse is a pattern of adult behaviour that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth. While all forms of abuse have emotional effects on children, there are other acts that only affect a child emotionally and not physically or sexually. Emotional abuse is unique in that though it is very common, it is seldom reported. Such acts are emotional acts and these acts include the following statements and non-verbal expressions that make a child feel unwanted, rejected, worthless or neglected.
- It includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can reach their full potential in the context of the society in which the child lives. There may also be acts toward the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power. Acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, scape-goating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment (WHO, 1999).

Neglect and Negligence treatment

Definition of neglect

- Neglect is the withdrawal of or failure to provide a child with the basic necessities for physical growth and development or the failure to protect a child from any kind of danger or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in an insignificant impairment of the child's health or development.

- It can also be defined as the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and which causes, or has a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible (WHO, 1999).

Sexual abuse

- Sexual abuse is physical or non-physical sexual contact between a child and an adult or older child for the sexual gratification of the offender or inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature with a child. The abuser is usually more powerful in terms of age, intelligence, physical strength, and control over the child.
- 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 which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws and social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by an activity between a child and an 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 a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances, Internet pictures and materials (WHO, 1999). The recent use of technology such as the Internet by adults to entice children to meet or participate in virtual sex is also an abuse.

Sexual Exploitation

- This is abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the exploitation of another. Such forms can be Child prostitution, trafficking of children

for sexual abuse and exploitation being one example. Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development (WHO, 1999). Children being recruited into the army would also come under this category.

- It is clear from the above definitions that abuse can be caused by both actions and omissions and can take place both within the context of the family and in the context of other agencies and careers.



PART C

1.1 Areas that can potentially expose children to exploitation and abuse as we work with them:

Direct Support

- Raising children's hopes and then failing to deliver. This usually occurs when children are promised material assistance such as school uniforms or shoes then fail to deliver them, hence, are emotionally abused.
- Delays in giving out due support e.g. delays in food deliveries. Children are emotionally abused as they get to wait very long hours exposing them to hunger in order for food to be delivered.
- Labelling children as orphans

Case Handling / PSS & Family Strengthening

- Lack of confidentiality.
- Exposing families to Home visits.
- Use of external escorts who they do not know.

Capacity Building or Development

- Making children attend workshops during school hours.
- Children are also abused emotionally by visitors especially through prayer when they refer to them as orphans and abandoned children who do not have anyone looking after them.
- Abuse by male staff. Due to unequal distribution of power some young girls are sexually abused by staff members so as to receive favours from them.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Due to communication breakdown between the organisation and the children (beneficiaries), children are abused emotionally as they would not know whether they would be on educational assistance or not.

- This usually occurs when donors come, and their life history would be shared with them without consent.

1.2 Tiritose has put the following ways to protect children

Tiritose will protect the children by:

- Training Volunteers and Interns on child protection issues.
- The use of our code of conduct for all employees, volunteers and interns.
- Zero tolerance of a sexual relationship between staff member/volunteer and a beneficiary. Failure to comply, point two will be used to effect desired result.
- Ethical Considerations to be followed for instance seeking consent before usage of beneficiaries' photos.
- No home visits by external people.
- To enhance confidentiality, children should be taken to a waiting room away from the reception so as to avoid unnecessary interrogation of the child by staff members.
- Cases to be referred to the appropriate person.
- No direct interviews of children by the media.
- There should not be over involvement with the child by officers during case handling.
- Officers to stick to their appointments so as to avoid children waiting very long hours before they are attended to.
- Using institution workers as escorts.
- Code of conduct on house unit.
- A disciplinary committee to be put in place.
- Volunteers and interns to be vetted before they can do any work.

Procedures to be followed to ensure Child Protection/Measures to be taken to prevent child abuse or guard against any forms of it:

- Recruitment of staff, volunteers and interns
 1. Background checks to be done on all employees, staff, volunteers and interns.
 2. Vetting of all prospective volunteers, interns and employees.

Ensuring awareness and prevention.

- Training staff, interns and volunteers on child protection.
- Induction to include issues of child protection.
- Pre-distribution addresses will be done to raise awareness on the rights of beneficiaries.

1.3 Guidelines for Reporting Suspected or Actual Abuse of Children within Tiritose or our partner network

This section is to ensure that it is clear what steps should be taken if it is believed that the Child Protection Code of Conduct is being broken.

The guiding principle is that the protection of the child is always the overriding consideration.

No staff member or partner organisation will prejudice their own position or standing with Tiritose by responsibly reporting someone who they believe is breaking the Child Protection Code of Conduct.

Responsible reporting also means that any person making a report should bear in mind that all concerns are allegations until they have been investigated. For this reason, it is important for anyone raising a concern to strictly follow the reporting model set out below. In particular, confidentiality is expected within the reporting chain.

Procedural guidelines

Staff members should normally discuss their concerns with the Chief Worker Bee. Where workers are unable or unwilling to do this, they must raise their concerns with the relevant Managers and placement site supervisors.

Discussions should focus on:

- Evidence that the Code of Conduct has been broken
- Risks to the child/children
- Measures to safeguard children and minimise risk
- Action/next steps

Concerns should be reported as quickly as possible.

The Chief Worker Bee should discuss with the relevant Managers and placement site supervisors:

Discussions should focus on:

- An assessment of the reported concerns and support needs.
- Whether, and at what stage, Tiritose staff should report the concerns to external bodies.
- Appropriate response e.g. disciplinary process or urgent action if children are judged to be at risk.

The Chief Worker Bee should be able to consult and seek support from the relevant Managers and placement site supervisors at any stage of the process. The relevant Managers may seek advice from other colleagues as necessary.

Making reports

- Any concerns, allegations or disclosures should be written down as soon as possible. Records should be signed and dated.
- Records should be detailed and precise, focusing on what was said or observed, who was present and what happened. Speculation and interpretation should be clearly distinguished from reporting.
- Any concern, disclosure or allegation is alleged rather than proven at this point.
- All such records should be treated as extremely confidential. They should be passed only to the persons specified in this reporting model. It is the responsibility of each individual in possession of the information to maintain confidentiality.
- However, it is very important that confidentiality is never promised. It must be made clear that following the steps in this policy is an obligation. Explanations should be given about the possible outcomes that could result from information being reported.
- In certain instances, there will be the obligation for Tiritose and its staff to report concerns to the appropriate external bodies. This will usually occur as a consequence of the reporting procedure. However, if urgent action is required in order to protect children then it may be prior to the reporting procedure.

1.4 Responding to concerns

In order to protect children it may be necessary to take immediate action to ensure that the Code is not broken again or further abuse cannot take place. Such action may require a worker to report to the relevant Manager or placement site supervisor.

The best interests of the child and the desire to secure the best outcomes for the child should always govern decisions regarding what action should be taken in response to concerns.

Judicial processes - Some concerns may be so serious that Tiritose has to report to local authorities and police. In these circumstances, based on local guidelines, Tiritose will assess on a case by case basis what steps to take. If the concerns are reported to local authorities, Tiritose staff will assist the authorities wherever possible but may also need to make arrangements, possibly for representation for the person who has had allegations made against them.

The guiding principle is that the protection of the child is always the overriding consideration.

