



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Contents

1. Evergreen Africa's Commitment to Children
2. Definitions of Abuse
3. Recognising Signs of Child Abuse
4. Personnel
5. Behaviour and Good Practice Protocols
6. Disciplining and Verbal interaction
7. Disclosure Protocol
8. Child Protection Reporting Procedure Form

1. Evergreen Africa's Commitment to Children

Evergreen Africa commits to working with children to help them discover their potential, to receive healing and restoration where needed, and aim to provide each child with a loving and safe environment.

Childhood is an important time, full of innocence and where foundations for life are laid. Each child has the right to a life free from abuse of any kind, be that physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, or any activity that undermines who they are. Children have a right to speak out, for abuse to be brought into the light, and dealt with appropriately, for the wellbeing and development of the child.

What is the need for a Child Protection Policy?

Evergreen Africa have both staff, volunteers, associates and visitors (collectively referred to hereinafter as 'personnel') within its programmes working with children, as well as personnel working in or visiting local communities where many children are present. It is important that a code of conduct whilst in the presence of children is understood, and agreed by all its personnel. A child protection policy also takes into account the vulnerability of children, and adds to Evergreen Africa's commitment of excellence in care for the children in all its programmes.

Through the implementation of a CPP:

- 1) Children are protected: This is the first and most important reason for a CPP. Children are vulnerable and this document will ensure that Evergreen Africa is doing everything within its power to make the children it works with safe whilst in its care, and that personnel know how to care for and help any child who is a victim of abuse in any area of his or her life.
- 2) Personnel are protected: Setting guidelines with all personnel empowers them to know what to do should inappropriate behaviour be observed. It also minimises the risk of personnel's behaviour being misconstrued.

3) Evergreen Africa is protected: Through the implementation of this policy, the credibility of Evergreen Africa, with both the beneficiary communities and donors will be protected.

Definition of a Child.

A child is defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as follows:
“A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years, unless under the law applicable to the child, adulthood is attained earlier.”

The UN Rights of the Child are at the core of this policy:

Article 3

Children should have their best interests given the utmost importance when adults make decisions about them.

Article 19

Children should be protected from being hurt, violence, abuse and neglect.

Article 34

Children have the right to be protected from sexual abuse.

Article 39

Children have the right to help if they have been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

2. Definitions of Abuse

The WHO definition of child abuse is as follows:

Child abuse or maltreatment 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, trust or power (<http://www.yesican.org/definitions/WHO.html>).

Child abuse can fall into a number of categories:

Neglect is where the parent, guardian, legal custodian or another person who has temporary or permanent charge of a child, fails to provide the child’s basic needs, for reasons other than poverty or war. Neglect may be physical, educational, and emotional.

Physical Abuse is physical injury to a child as a result of force, however small or large the injury is (it may be small bruises, fractures or even death). Suffocation, drowning, and giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison are also included in this category.

Sexual Abuse is where one, either an adult to a child, or a child to a child, uses the child victim to meet their own sexual needs and desires.

There are categories of sexual abuse: direct contact and non-direct contact.

- Direct contact offences are when the perpetrator comes into direct contact with a child, in an inappropriate way, either direct skin contact or through clothes.

- Non-direct contact includes indecent exposure, peeping, verbal sexual comments or stimulation, showing pornographic material, producing pornographic materials, or allowing/forcing a child to watch sexual relations.
- Sexual exploitation is where a child's vulnerability is abused and they are exploited to make financial profit. Child prostitution and trafficking of children for sexual abuse and exploitation are examples of this.

Emotional Abuse damages a child's emotional development, and/or sense of self-worth. It includes repeated criticism, with or without threats, and rejection of the child. Love may also be absent, with children in this position regularly feeling frightened or endangered.

Spiritual Abuse is the misuse of those in a position of power, or leadership over a child. Imposing personal opinions coerces compliance (such as forcing a child to pray, worship or join in with all activities). This can also include manipulation, or imposition of personal opinions onto a child to make them conform or behave a certain way.

There are also a number of other recognised forms of abuse including:

Bullying: This is recognised as harmful to children in whatever form it takes, be that physical, verbal or emotional intimidation. Racial or sexist remarks may be made frequently, and the victims may find themselves excluded or isolated.

Witchcraft/ritualistic abuse: Some communities believe strongly that adults and children may be in possession of evil spirits which can bring bad luck on a family. The tradition comes from a mixture of traditional African spiritual beliefs and evangelical Christianity. These beliefs can lead to practices that may be harmful to children, e.g. fasting, beating, immersion in water. These practices can lead to extreme cruelty and even death of children. In such communities, disabled children are rarely seen as a blessing and their behaviours are often interpreted as a sign of passion by evil spirits. Other communities or individuals may use and abuse children through ritualistic practices and ceremonies.

In 2008, Save the Children UK compiled the report 'No-one to Turn to' highlighting the abuse of children by humanitarian workers, peacekeepers and others acting on behalf of the international community and it is important to bear this in mind.

3. Recognising Signs of Child Abuse

Signs of Physical Abuse

Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them

Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc

Injuries that have not received medical attention

Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming

Bruises, bites, burns, fractures, cuts, scratches, etc which do not have an accidental explanation

Substance abuse

Signs of Neglect

Undernourishment and failure to grow
Constant hunger
Stealing or gorging food
Untreated illnesses
Inadequate care

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
Eating disorders
Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy/head pains

Signs of Emotional Abuse

Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws
Depression/aggression
Extreme anxiety
Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
Obsessions or phobias
Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
Attention-seeking behaviour
Persistent tiredness
Running away, stealing and lying

Any change in behaviour in a child may indicate that something is not right, and must be closely monitored. Within our programmes we will seek to model and share good practice in regards to safeguarding children within our communities.

4. Personnel

While recruiting new personnel for its programmes where there is access to children, Evergreen Africa will discuss the CPP. Only personnel who are happy to comply with the CPP will be accepted. This applies to all Evergreen Africa personnel

The following steps will be taken to ensure a person's suitability for working in a post with access to children:

The applicant will complete an application form, which includes in it any habits which may be harmful, convictions, spent or otherwise of offences against children.

Reference checks. Two reliable character referees are needed for each candidate.

Where the candidate has worked with children before, at least one of these should be from someone who has witnessed this work. References will be followed up by a phone call or email exchange as required.

All potential staff, including short or long term volunteers, are required to complete the above steps, and submit an application form to Evergreen Africa before acceptance.

In the case of countries where there are national checks for those working with children, such as the Criminal Record Bureau, this should also be completed and a copy sent prior to accepting the person..

As part of its commitment to excellence in caring for children, Evergreen Africa will not in any circumstances engage personnel who have prior convictions for child abuse, pornography or any offence related to harm of children. If background checks prove a person is not suitable to work with children, Evergreen Africa reserves the right not to engage them.

All personnel are required to sign a form to indicate that they have read, understood, and will abide by the conditions in this CPP. A copy will be kept on their file and a copy will be given to them directly. In the case of illiterate staff, this policy will be discussed with them by their superior, and they will sign to say this has happened.

If after commencing work, it is found that false information was given to secure an engagement, the person will be immediately suspended, whilst a fair hearing is held. If the person is found to have withheld, or given false information, their engagement will be immediately terminated.

5. Behaviour and Good Practice Protocols

Personnel will always behave in a way that demonstrates, through their language, appearance and actions, Evergreen Africa's commitment to treat children as important individuals. Consideration to the child's dignity must be taken into account where photographs or video are taken of activities. In appropriate cases, the children's permission should first be sought with no promises to be given copies.

Photographs may be used with discretion in official reports, official information sharing documents and Evergreen Africa website and Social Media. Permission must be sought from Evergreen Africa first for use in any other place.

Generally, all contact with children should be in an open space, with others present. On the rare occasion it is necessary to talk with a child alone, it must always be in a place that is visible, and, if in a room, with the door open.

Evergreen Africa is committed to working in a safe, clean environment, and will regularly inspect any premises used for work with children for potential hazards. During all their contact with children, Evergreen Africa personnel will at all times seek to put the needs of the children, including their physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs, first.

All touch will be directly appropriate to the child's, not the personnel's needs. In all activities, only appropriate levels of touch will be used, and Evergreen Africa personnel will

never do something for a child that they can do themselves (e.g. bathing, toileting or dressing).

All touch will be according to the child's needs, though where these needs are inappropriate Evergreen Africa will seek to teach the child appropriate needs. Evergreen Africa personnel will not kiss, touch, hug, hold or fondle children in an inappropriate way.

Individual children's needs should to be taken into account. Evergreen Africa personnel will not demand physical attention from the children in their care. Where possible, child programmes will seek to teach children safe and unsafe touch, thereby empowering the children.

Personnel need to be aware that the situation in Uganda may mean that children have been exposed to situations not conducive to a healthy childhood. Such children may have been exposed to abuse, or manipulative situations and see this as a normal way of life. Their behaviour may be manipulative or sexually suggestive. The responsibility of conduct always lies with the personnel, with an added responsibility to see that such children receive counselling and help.

All children must be treated fairly, regardless of who they are or which tribe or religion they are from.

All official (or other) visitors to projects must first have permission from the leader of the project and have a briefing on the CPP. They must have an Evergreen Africa person escorting them all the time and must never be left in charge of, or alone with, children.

All work must be transparent. Parents/Guardians must know they are welcome to visit to see what their children are doing.

6. Disciplining and Verbal Interaction

In all activities, Evergreen Africa personnel will seek to develop a healthy, relationship with the children where the children know problems can be discussed, and their concerns taken seriously. Disciplining in this environment is a healthy way for a child to grow.

Personnel will be aware of their language at all times, and understand how cruel and harsh words can negatively affect children. At no times shall cruel or harsh words, or comments be made to children about home, family, tribe, past experiences or any other situation. At no time should a joke be made at a child's expense, whether in front of adults or children. Conversations regarding sexual life skills and the like, will take place within designated sessions; if a child brings up the subject outside of these times, personnel will need to make a decision as to whether this is a healthy time to continue the discussion, bearing in mind any other children present, and the activities at the time.

Where a child displays regular misbehaviour, personnel will seek to work with the child concerned by discussing their behaviour and will aim to seek the root cause, and identify ways for behaviour change, developing an individual plan for the child to improve behaviour where needed.

All Evergreen Africa activities will have a clear set of standards stating appropriate behaviour in a language that is understood as are the consequences of breaking them. Where possible children will be a part of setting these standards,.

Evergreen Africa personnel will always seek to focus on the positive behaviour of the child, praising, wherever possible, good behaviour and attitudes.

Each child will be viewed as an individual, and as such, it is recognised that different methods of discipline may need to be used with each child. Evergreen Africa believes that discipline is a crucial aspect of child development. A child needs discipline to know what behaviour is acceptable, and what is not. They need to know boundaries and what is expected of them. Appropriate discipline creates a healthy environment for a child to develop in and feel accepted. Appropriate discipline always accepts the child, but rejects unwanted behaviour.

Evergreen Africa personnel will seek to discipline appropriately at all times, never disciplining in anger. Should personnel be so involved in the incident that a high level of anger is felt, and fair disciplining is not possible, other personnel should be sought to administer discipline.

Public disciplining should not be used as the norm and only used in extreme circumstances. Each child requiring discipline should be taken aside and dealt with as an individual and in private.

Evergreen Africa personnel will never use culturally inappropriate and undue physical discipline, or violence in words or action of any kind when disciplining a child.

Children must not be physically hurt, scared, degraded, intimidated or humiliated through discipline. Many children have already experienced violence, and possibly abuse. Such punishment rarely addresses the root of the behavioural problem and damages relationships.

When disciplining is needed, the child must always have an explanation as to why sanctions are being used. Although isolation is a good and approved form of discipline, this should not be in a locked room or out of sight of the leader; rather it is time of missing out on what is going on for a short period of time. Missing time in an activity is acceptable; missing food, water or medical assistance is not.

Any personnel displaying inappropriate or abusive behaviour towards a child/children will be subject to discipline, and possible dismissal.

7. Disclosure Protocol

The following are guidelines for Evergreen Africa personnel to follow under the circumstances of a child disclosing abuse.

Do not promise confidentiality, but reassure them they are right to tell you.

Listen carefully, talk little, encourage the child that they have not done anything wrong, and they have done well to tell you.

Avoid leading questions; e.g. ask 'Then what happened?' not 'Did he touch your leg?'

Try to get a clear understanding of what happened.

React calmly, never show shock or disgust.

Do not speak ill of the abuser – the child may still love him or her.

As soon as possible, inform a person in authority of what the child disclosed. Write down a record of the conversation using the child's own words on the appropriate form, including any other relevant information, such as body language etc.

Maintain the child's confidentiality to all other people – do not share with the Evergreen Africa team.

Take the child seriously, even if it involves someone you find it hard to believe would harm a child. Experience tells us we MUST listen and respond.

Do not alert the alleged abuser, even if you know him or her, to ensure the safety of the child. If the child needs urgent medical attention make sure they receive it.

Parents and carers should only be contacted once you have advice and guidance from Evergreen Africa's senior leaders.

The guiding principle in responding to any concerns around child protection is that the safety and welfare of the child should always come first. No child should be put at more risk by any action you take.

Reporting by Personnel

All Evergreen Africa personnel shall notify the Executive Officer or a Trustee in his absence, as soon as possible, and *no longer* than 24 hours after first observing or suspecting an abuse or receiving an allegation. He/she will act immediately but keep strict confidentiality.

Any allegation of personnel MUST be reported for an appropriate investigation to take place. It is important that the person accused is not informed of the accusation until advice is given.

A report using the form below should be completed as a matter of urgency.

Reporting Procedures

Procedures and systems operate under the premise that child abuse and silence about abuse is wrong. The safety of the child is always the overriding consideration. **Child protection is the responsibility of all Evergreen Africa personnel.**

Any behaviour which violates Evergreen Africa's Child Protection Policy is to be reported:

- 1) When abuse is observed or suspected
- 2) When an allegation or disclosure of abuse is made (by an adult or child).

Any incident regarding the abuse of a child will be treated seriously - believing the child until proven otherwise.

Reporting Mechanism

There are 2 types of reports that can be made.

Category 1 For concerns relating to Evergreen Africa personnel:

Where it is suspected that a possible criminal activity has taken place, report to relevant child protection authorities to determine next steps.

Ensure appropriate disciplinary proceedings are instigated within Evergreen Africa.

Category 2 For concerns relating to child abuse in the community.

Report to child protection authorities if criminal activity has taken place.

Offer advice and support to the child and family concerned.

Work together with other appropriate agencies on child protection.

Duties of the Executive Officer/Trustees

Within 24 hours of receiving information on an allegation of child abuse, the Executive Director/Trustee shall:

Convene a Child Protection Meeting which will include one other senior leader plus

Assess together with members at the meeting the nature of the allegation through a thorough investigation of the incident and, where it involves a possible criminal matter, report this to the appropriate authorities.

If the matter is in breach of this Child Protection Policy, implement the appropriate disciplinary procedure for the personnel concerned.

Depending on the outcome of the Child Protection Meeting and investigations carried out, make recommendations deemed appropriate to respond to the concerns, based on what is in the best interest of the child.

Send a written report to Evergreen Africa Trustees.

Confidentiality

The report will be kept in the strictest confidentiality to protect the identity of the witness, the child or children involved, and the alleged offender. However, it is very important that Evergreen Africa personnel never promise confidentiality either to a child disclosing abuse, or to an adult disclosing concerns about another's abusive actions or information about their own behaviour. It must be made clear to Evergreen Africa personnel at time of engagement that they are obliged to follow this policy and be made aware of the possible outcomes that will result from acting outside this policy.



EVERGREEN AFRICA CHILD PROTECTION REPORTING FORM

CONFIDENTIAL

Child's name:

Date of Birth: (if known)

Relationship of person responsible for the child – and others living in the household:

School:

Religion:

Village:

Time and date of referral:

Name of person reporting disclosure/concern:

Contact details:

Relationship to child:

Details of disclosure/concern (using child's words if a disclosure):

Suspected perpetrator's details:

Is the child currently safe to the best of your knowledge?

Does the child need (has s/he received) emergency medical care?

Is anyone else aware of the situation to your knowledge?

What action has been taken?

Signed (person making referral):

Name:

Date:

Received by (Executive Officer/Trustee) signature:

Name:

Date: