

## Oxfam Child Protection Policy

HR Policy Harmonization - H04 - categorized those HR Policies identified as essential for successful implementation (Category1) and which need to be harmonized during the Countdown stage, ready for day 1 of Go-Live.

Child Protection Policy is one of those HR policies.

During the Planning Stage the MA leads, with the Country Leadership Team, the development of the SMS Transition Plan and included in this will be the harmonizing of HR policies to apply in country etc.

A Child Protection policy statement agreed by the HR Taskforce follows for use by Country Leadership teams for this purpose.

Where implementing affiliates have existing guidelines, forms or procedures in sufficient detail to agree a harmonized policy and it is preferred to develop a policy from these, they can use their own, **so long as they do not conflict with the common principles below. Please note the requirement to agree the age of a child to be applied in country where marked \* years.**

If adopted as the harmonized version for go live, the remainder of the policy should be checked in country against local employment law to ensure that all expectations can be met and are legal in country. Changes can be made but these should be checked with HR representatives (typically this will be coordinated by the Managing Affiliate) and the changes should be consistent for all staff operating in country.

## Principles

- **Oxfam believes all children have a right to protection from abuse or exploitation.**
- **Oxfam will not tolerate any child abuse or exploitation by anyone who works with us.**
- **We have a responsibility to ensure that all employees, volunteers, contractors and partners are given clear guidance about the standards of behavior and practice required of them at all times when they are in contact with children.**
- **Oxfam has a commitment to keeping children safe by all reasonable means.**

- **Matters raised under this policy will be dealt with in a confidential, fair and timely manner.**

## Definitions

### A child is anyone under 18 years old

*Exploitation* is the abuse of a position of vulnerability or differential power

*Abuse* can be physical, sexual, or emotional and causes harm.

*Physical:* violence towards or deliberate injury of a child.

*Sexual:* using a child for sexual stimulation or gratification.

*Emotional;* behaviour which attacks a child's self-esteem

### Anyone working for, with or on behalf of Oxfam must not at any time:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- Have sexual intercourse, or engage in any sexual activity, with anyone under \*years of age (*\*the age stipulated in the country and that this is not below 16*), regardless of the age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defense.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse or exploitation.
- Have a child /children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home, unsupervised, or spend unnecessary time alone with children.
- Condone, or participate in, behavior of children that is illegal, unsafe, exploitative or abusive. This includes viewing images of a pornographic nature which feature children.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.

## Procedures

### Reporting Procedures

If there is an urgent child protection situation, for example if a child is in imminent danger of exploitation or abuse, then immediate protective action is recommended. The first priority of anyone who works with Oxfam to whom child protection concerns are reported must be the immediate safety and welfare of the child, taking into account the personal security of our staff.

### **‘Internal’ Reporting Procedures - Worldwide**

It is the responsibility of all who represent Oxfam in whatever capacity, to raise their concerns appropriately.

Any person working for Oxfam who suspects possible issues of abuse or exploitation in projects managed or supported by Oxfam, receives a complaint from the community, or is aware that an individual working for Oxfam is committing abuse or exploitation, **must** raise these immediately through their line management.

- Raise the matter in writing with line manager.
- The line manager will escalate the complaint as soon as possible (within 24 hours maximum) to the appropriate level of management and HR to investigate the matter.
- Individual’s manager will notify them once matter has been resolved.

If it is not possible to raise a concern with an immediate line manager, issues should be taken to the next level of management

### **‘External’ reporting procedures**

Complaints of this nature raised from outside the organisation should use formal complaints procedures where available:

- Oxfam’s senior representatives in country are responsible for responding to complaints about Oxfam’s programme in that country. Raise the matter in writing with them. Contact details are on Oxfam’s website or from local staff.
- If the complaint is about the senior representatives, complaints should be directed to a more senior manager, at Regional or Headquarters level. Details are available from the Oxfam country and/or Regional Office or via notices distributed by Oxfam programme staff.
- Any concerns raised will be treated with absolute confidentiality and without delay.

If there appears to be a situation of abuse in a partner organisation and reporting to authorities is not viable, one outcome may be to withdraw funding or pull out of the networking/partnering relationship.

If a matter is raised verbally from outside the organisation with anyone who works for Oxfam, (volunteer, employee, contractor), the person in receipt of the information must put it in writing immediately (or as soon as they are physically able to do so) to senior management. (see internal reporting procedure).

### **Breaches of this Policy**

The Code of Conduct states

- I will not abuse or exploit children under the age of\* (*\*the age stipulated in the country and that this is not below 16* ), in any way and will report any such behaviour of others to my line management.

Breaches of this policy or the Code of Conduct will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedures, and may result in termination of employment.

Any employee who enters into commercial sex transactions or engages in sexual behaviour with anyone under the age of\* (*\*the age stipulated in the country and that this is not below 16* ), regardless of local custom, will be considered as having committed a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedures, taking into account the local legal context.

It may also be a criminal matter, and if so would normally be reported to external authorities. The manager dealing with it must give due consideration to the risks to individuals, partners or Oxfam and seek advice from their Headquarters when considering this course of action.

## **Guidelines for incorporating Child Protection into Programme and other work**

All employees and representatives should aim to:

- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risk of

- abuse, exploitation or harm coming to a child;
- Include thorough reference checking as part of recruitment and selection procedures
  - In a program involving children, appoint a child protection focal point whose role includes child safeguarding over other program commitments:
  - Promote a culture of openness in relation to child safeguarding issues, where any issues or concerns can be raised and discussed;
  - Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive or exploitative behaviour can be challenged;
  - Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns;
  - Empower child beneficiaries and communicate to them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem;
  - Use this policy to communicate to beneficiaries what standards of professional practice they can expect of Oxfam staff and what to do if they feel that anyone who works with Oxfam is falling short of these standards.
  - Risk assessments of programs or events should consider relevant child protection issues.