

# Child Protection Policy

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Children  
in Crossfire

GIVING CHILDREN THE CHANCE TO CHOOSE



This document sets out Children in Crossfire’s Child Protection Policy and Procedures. It is for all board members, staff, volunteers, partners, and is available to others who want to know how Children in Crossfire works in relation to Child Protection. Children in Crossfire is fully committed to doing all in its power to ensure that all children associated with our partners and projects at home or abroad, are accessing a safe environment free from abuse or exploitation. We will do this by ensuring our policy and procedures are fully implemented, regularly monitored and reviewed. We aim to be an example of best practice with regards to the protection of children.

# Child Protection Policy

Effective From: September 2015

Renewal Due: September 2018

## Introduction

Children in Crossfire is committed to protecting children in our areas of operation from exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, sexual, emotional and physical abuse, and reduce their risk and vulnerability. This policy sets out what we expect from staff, board members, volunteers, interns, partners, associates, independent contractors and all who work with children through Children in Crossfire.

Child Protection finds basis in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990 (herein referred to as the CRC). Children in Crossfire have aligned this policy to UNCRC Articles 3(2), 19, 34 & 39. It is also aligned to the legal contexts of [Children First Act 2015](#) and [The Children Northern Ireland Order 1995](#)

## Important Definitions

**A child**, for the purposes of the Child Protection Policy is any human being under the age of 18 years

**Child Abuse** consists of anything, which individuals, institutions, or processes does or fails to do which directly or indirectly harm children, or damages their prospects of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

- Both boys and girls can be victims of all forms of abuse
- A child of any age, sex, race, religion, and socioeconomic background can suffer child abuse and neglect

- A child who is being abused may experience more than one type of abuse. For example, physical and sexual abuse almost always involve emotional abuse as well
- Abused children can be helped to lead fulfilling lives, but we must NEVER expect them to just forget about it and ‘get over it’. The impact of child abuse lasts a lifetime

Forms of abuse include:

**Physical abuse:** the intentional causing of physical harm to a child. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, biting, strangling, poisoning or otherwise physical hurting a child

**Emotional abuse:** involves continuing behaviour by adults towards children, which includes threats, rejection, isolation, belittling, name calling or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment which erodes social competence or self-esteem over time

**Neglect or negligent treatment:** is the failure to provide a child - within the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caregivers - with the conditions essential for their physical and emotional development and well-being

**Sexual abuse:** occurs when someone uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity. Sexually abusive behaviours can involve fondling genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling breasts, voyeurism, and exhibitionism or exposing the child to, or involving the child in, pornography

**Exploitation:** Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that are unacceptable because it deprives them of their childhood, development or dignity. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution

## **Awareness Creation**

Children in Crossfire will undertake to educate its staff, Board Members and partners on issues pertaining to Child Protection by:

- Training staff and board members annually
- Informing beneficiaries of this policy
- Supporting our partner organisations in training, policy and procedures
- Including policy and procedures in orientation of new staff and in the Staff and Volunteer Manuals
- Ensuring all personnel sign an acknowledgement of compliance with the policy
- Informing all personnel of policy changes as they arise

## **Programme Design, implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Children in Crossfire will:

- Ensure that an assessment of the circumstances of children is incorporated into all surveys conducted prior to the initiation of any programme as appropriate. Programme design will include plans to implement rigorous Child Protection procedures to protect children from situations of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Work with others to enhance awareness of abuse and exploitation, offer information on community resources and support services, and provide training and skills enhancement for project staff
- Ensure Programme Plans promote the prevention of child abuse, exploitation and neglect by exploring the causes and implementing responses to support family and community responsibility for the wellbeing of children

## Recruitment and Screening

Children in Crossfire will screen all staff, volunteers and board. We will:

- Request permission for a criminal record or police background check for any conviction related to abuse of children. Permission can be obtained through a Consent Form. If such checks are instituted, candidates are informed at the time of interview that hiring will be contingent on a clear record check
- Inform personnel of Children in Crossfire's Child Protection Policy at the start of any recruiting process
- Conduct an interview which includes at least one behavioural question related to working with children
- Conduct at least two verbal reference checks
- Require a police clearance (or a signed statement from a senior community leader that the person has not been involved in crimes related to children)
- Policies and standards will be reviewed during orientation

When negotiating to engage contractors (such as security, cleaning or consultants) we will:

- Require contractors have screened their people appropriately (including police and background checks where relevant)
- Require contractors on site to read and comply with the Children in Crossfire Child Protection Policy
- commit to doing our utmost to ensure independent contractors, regardless of the country context, adhere to the highest available standards of Child Protection

In the best interests of children, Children in Crossfire will not hire anyone with a prior conviction for child abuse, paedophilia or related offences. In the event that local law prohibits such a broad hiring rule, no person with a conviction

for child abuse, paedophilia or related offences may be hired into any position which includes direct access to children, or information about sponsored children, including picture folders. Children in Crossfire reserves the right not to hire an applicant if the background check reveals that the person is not suitable to work with children.

## **Behaviour Protocols/Code of Conduct**

These are designed to protect children, but are also intended to give personnel/project visitors confidence that their behavior is in line with an acceptable code of conduct when in contact with children. All visiting personnel/project visitors must be briefed on local behaviour protocols, which reflect behaviour requirements based on local sensitivities. The following basic Children in Crossfire Behaviour Protocols/Code of Conduct must be followed:

I understand that while involved with Children in Crossfire, I will:

- Treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status
- Not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate
- Not engage children in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts
- Not give gifts or money to any children as this shows favouritism and encourages dependency
- Adhere to the 'two-adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where children are involved, and must not take a child or children into a private place out of view of other adult
- Not hire children for domestic or other labour or provide shelter for children associated with Children in Crossfire in their homes

- Not stay alone overnight with one or more children who are not part of your extended/community family, whether in the staff member's house, project premises or elsewhere
- Not use physical punishment on children
- Use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with Children in Crossfire that relate to child exploitation and abuse
- Immediately inform a Senior Manager of any concerns that I might have in regards to the overall safety and wellbeing of any child

## **Communications about Children**

I understand that when photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, I must:

- Truthfully represent any image or depicted situation both in its immediate and in its wider context
- Avoid images and messages that stereotype, sensationalise or discriminate against people, situations or places
- Ensure the full understanding, participation and permission of the subjects (or subjects' parents'/guardian), and specify to them how the image/film will be used
- Ensure those whose situation is being represented have the opportunity to communicate their stories themselves
- Establish and record whether the subjects wish to be named or identifiable and always act accordingly
- Assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions before photographing or filming a child
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive
- Ensure file labels or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form



- Not use scanned images of children from/in other websites without formal permission of the responsible office or the project and the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child. This permission will be in writing (whenever possible) and may be part of the packet of documents signed by the child's parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Not use child personal and physical information that could be used to identify the location of a child within a country on the Children in Crossfire web site or in any other form of communication about a child

Individuals or organisations requesting the use of Children in Crossfire resources such as videos or photographs should be required to sign an agreement with the appropriate Children in Crossfire authority as to the proper use of such materials. The agreement will include a statement that any use of such materials, for purposes other than what is agreed upon, could subject the borrowing individual or organisation to legal action. Furthermore, failure to adhere to the agreed upon use of the material will result in the immediate termination of Children in Crossfire's permission to use the subject materials and/or require immediate return of all materials provided by Children in Crossfire as well as any copies of such materials.

## **Reporting**

Staff, volunteers or partners of Children in Crossfire activities must report to Children in Crossfire when they have a reasonable belief that a child has been harmed or is at potential risk of harm when it is due to the actions of a staff member, volunteer or partner of Children in Crossfire. Concerns that must be reported include:

- An observation or disclosure of actual harm or abuse to a child
- An observation or disclosure of potential risk of harm to a child
- A breach of the Child Protection Policy or Code of Conduct for working with children
- An observation of possession of child exploitation material

- Children in Crossfire also expects staff, volunteers and partners to be observant for indicators of child abuse and to raise concerns, even in the absence of a disclosure. If you are not sure if what you have seen or heard is harm or risk of harm to a child, talk to the Executive Director

Who you need to report to: A report must be made to one of the following (in order of priority):

- Designated Child Protection Officer
- Executive Director

How to make a report: Reports can be made in person or by telephone as soon as possible. Verbal reports should be followed up with written notification within 24 hours.

What do you need to include in the report: You should provide as much verbatim information as possible, including:

- Dates, times, form of communication of disclosure
- Names of people/organisations involved
- Details of alleged incidents and which authorities have/will be informed
- Activities/interventions already undertaken and support services engaged
- Details of what Children in Crossfire proposes to do

## **Investigation**

The following protocol will be applied during any investigation:

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

- Children in Crossfire has an obligation to initiate an internal investigation. The employee/volunteer will be encouraged to participate in the investigation by providing information and the names of witnesses to be interviewed. At the conclusion of the investigation, the employee will be informed of the results of the investigation and what corrective action, if any, will be taken
- Children in Crossfire will submit reports to local authorities as required, and will give due regard to the appropriateness of informing local 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
- Information about a Child Protection incident will be shared with people on a 'right' and 'need to know' basis as deemed necessary by Children in Crossfire management. Names and identities will not to be disclosed outside the management group designated as 'need to know' unless cleared by Children in Crossfire management
- The best interests of the child will be kept at the centre of a plan for responding to the results of an investigation
- A strategy for dealing with media inquiries that includes a designated spokes-person will be established

The following applies when making a response to findings and concluding an investigation:

- The best interests and welfare of a child is of prime importance to Children in Crossfire. In case of a proven or suspected abuse, every effort will be made to refer the child to relevant psychological counselling or appropriate assistance
- If the decision is to terminate employment of the accused, the employee/volunteer will have the findings of the investigation shared with him or her
- Effort will be made to provide assistance to an employee/volunteer accused of misconduct with children, including appropriate counselling and support
- In the event if 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

- All information concerning the incident and investigation will be documented in writing. A copy of the confidential report of the investigation and conclusion should be provided to the Executive Director if it involves a Children in Crossfire employee (e.g., expatriate, contract, secondment or national employee of a Children in Crossfire office)
- In the event an employee/volunteer is discharged for suspected abuse, Children in Crossfire may disclose such information if requested by a prospective employer. Such disclosures will be made in accordance with applicable law and/or customs in the country of work

## **Advocacy**

The following sets out how Children in Crossfire shall be actively involved in advocating for the protection of children:

- Children in Crossfire’s Child Protection policy includes plans to be involved in community, national and regional activities which promote the rights of children and seek their protection from various forms of exploitation and abuse. Advocacy efforts will include policy influencing for changes in public policies that have an adverse effect on children or do not address their needs
- Children in Crossfire will raise awareness among partner organisations and donors of issues related to exploitation of children, and measures being taken to protect them. Children in Crossfire will seek and maintain collaboration with Child Protection professionals and relevant agencies to ensure Child Protection knowledge, policies and procedures are up to date
- Local and national best practices and lessons learned concerning child rights and Child Protection will be disseminated throughout the Children in Crossfire Partnership to enhance knowledge, staff competence and programme approaches
- Children in Crossfire will develop and support policy and research capacities that seek to change structures and systems that jeopardise the rights of children. We will advocate for the laws that protect and promote the rights of all children by participating in relevant forums

## Partner Organisations

Children in Crossfire will enter into agreements with partner organisations, which provide direct or indirect services to children and young people. In doing so we will:

- Require assurance that partner organisations have adequate Child Protection policies and procedures in place to protect children, and/or support the development of such policies and procedures to meet the highest possible standard in line with Children in Crossfire’s policy
- Evaluate and monitor partner policy and procedures in an on-going basis, and review protocols for awareness raising amongst target beneficiaries and key target actors
- Actively promote a culture of protecting children through opportunities for partner training and emphasising the importance of taking responsibility to do all that is reasonably possible to ensure children in their care are free from abuse
- Ensure partners have the contact details of the Children in Crossfire designated Child Protection Officer who can offer advice and support

### ***Partner/Staff/Volunteer DECLARATION***

This is to certify that we ..... (insert organisation or individual name) have received, read and understand the Children in Crossfire Child Protection Policy and Procedures. This is also to certify that we are committed to implementing Child Protection in line with Children in Crossfire.

Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....