



Creating a Safe Environment for Children and Young adults

A child Protection Policy

Introduction:

The Mud House Children's Foundation is committed to ensuring the fulfilment of children's rights including their right to protection. We take seriously our responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we will take positive action to prevent those who abuse children from becoming involved with The Mud House Children's Foundation and take stringent measures against any staff, volunteer and associates who abuse a child. Our decisions and actions in response to Child protection concerns and breaches of this policy will be guided by the principle of *'the best interest of the child'*.

The Policy:

This Policy is a statement of intent that outlines the organisation's commitment to safeguarding children and young adults from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to their protection. This policy document aims to ensure all children who come into contact with the Mud House Children's Foundation are protected and kept free from harm. It is a guide to ensuring the risk of abuse of children is prevented. The safety of the children and youth adults is The Mud House Children's Foundation prime consideration at all times.

Definition of Terms:

- **Child /Young Adult:** For the purposes of this policy a "Child /Young Adult" means a boy or girl under the age of 21 years.
- **Child protection** is defined in this policy as the responsibilities and preventative and responsive measures and activities that The Mud House Children's Foundation and the schools they go undertake to protect children ensuring that no child is subject to child abuse as a result of their association with us, their contact with our staff, associates and visitors and/or their participation in any The Mud House Children's Foundation activity, including our projects and programs.

- **Child abuse:**

- We define child abuse as all forms of physical abuse, emotional/psychological ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their well being, dignity and prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.
- **Physical abuse:** Physical abuse is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.
- **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child's emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes the seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others.
- **Sexual Abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, for example, rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in the looking at or production of sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours.
- **Neglect** is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Scope of the Child Protection Policy:

This Child Protection Policy applies to all The Mud House Children's Foundation staff, volunteers, associates and visitors who must comply with its requirements and understand the sanctions that may be applied for breaches of the policy. Everyone who works with and engages with The Mud House Children's Foundation has a responsibility to ensure that children are protected.

This policy does not extend to child protection mechanisms in communities where The Mud House Children's Foundation works, as we recognise that communities partnering with us are best placed to address the risks of harm that exist within children's own communities ie the schools to which the children attend.

Principles of the Policy:

This policy is informed by a set of principles that are derived from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and include:

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- Each child has a fundamental right to life, survival and development.
- All children should be encouraged to fulfil their potential, and inequality and discrimination should be challenged.
- Children will be assured the right to express their views freely and this will be given 'due weight' in accordance with their age and level of maturity. We will not discriminate against any child. All children will be treated with respect irrespective of gender, nationality or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, physical or mental health and gender identity, family, socio-economic and cultural background, or any history of conflict with the law.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children.

The Mud House Children's Foundation has particular responsibilities to children who come into contact with us. No child must come to harm as a result of their engagement with The Mud House Children's Foundation.

These particular responsibilities extend to those individuals or organisations that are associated with The Mud House Children's Foundation. Therefore, everyone working for or associated with The Mud House Children's Foundation work must be aware of and adhere to the provisions of this policy. The Board of Trustees will ensure that all persons and/or organizations partnering with The Mud House Children's Foundation are aware of our safeguarding policy.

Statement of Commitment

We recognise that safeguarding the welfare of children is both an individual and organisational responsibility.

We promise:

- To take children seriously when they tell us about abuse, and to get help for them. If the abuser is a The Mud House Children's Foundation staff or associate we will make sure the abuse stops and that necessary action is taken against the abuser.
- To make sure children are always safe when we take them away from their communities, we will seek permission from parents.
- When we take videos or photos, or write stories about children they will be respectful, ensuring that they will not make children feel ashamed, or put children at risk.
- When we have private information about a child we will keep it safe.

The Mud House Children's Foundation is committed to complying with all relevant laws and will support all efforts aimed at achieving justice for children and young people who have encountered any form of abuse.

Staff, Volunteers, Committees and Associates Responsibility in Child Protection

This section identifies the expectations and requirements of staff, associates and volunteers (The Mud House Children's Foundation Team).

- All staff, committee members and volunteers have a responsibility to keep children safe and have a role in reporting concerns of potential or actual abuse.
- It is the responsibility of the The Mud House Children's Foundation team to be vigilant, have knowledge and awareness of the indicators of potential or actual abuse and to report any concerns, suspicions or allegations of suspected abuse immediately and ensure that the concern is taken seriously.
- It is recommended that two adults are present when working with children. This is not always possible however; when only one adult is present, the supervisor needs to be extra cautious about their interaction with the children.
- It is the responsibility of The Mud House Children's Foundation and heads of schools with the committee to thoroughly vet and check those volunteers that they wish to entrust as supervisors. It is recommended that the committees ensure that any supervisor appointed is reliable, dutiful and responsible and has been vetted ultimately with a Certificate of Good Conduct. The appointment of suitable supervisors is ultimately the responsibility of The Mud House Children's Foundation and committees, who would be more knowledgeable and better informed about the appropriate candidates.

Child Protection Procedures under the Maasai Hostel Program):

Step 1

Any cases of suspected or actual abuse within the Hostel will be reported to the manager / head of boarding and the The Mud House Children's Foundation immediately (and certainly within 12 hours) of the The Mud House Children's Foundation team becoming aware of the case. The matter will be entered into the hostel occurrence book and the entry witnessed by a second adult.

Step 2

The manager will within 12 hours (of receiving a child abuse report) convene the committee and deliberate on the matter; The committee will make a decision on whether to report the matter to the Police and the Department of Children affairs; if the committee is unable to reach consensus

on the next course of action, advice will be sought from the local officer within 24 hours of the committee meeting. The matter will thereafter, be reported to the appropriate authorities concerned (the Police and the welfare department). Minutes of the committee's deliberations will be minuted and signed by the secretary and the chairman of the committee.

- If a child makes a disclosure of abuse to a member of The Mud House Children's Foundation team, no matter how unlikely the claim may sound; the member will take this claim seriously and follows the procedure above (step 1&2).
- Under no circumstances should a member of staff or volunteer attempt to conduct an investigation or deal with concerns regarding child abuse on their own.
- All decisions taken by The Mud House Children's Foundation Committee on a reported case of abuse must be entered into the The Mud House Children's Foundation occurrence book and captured under The Mud House Children's Foundation committee minutes. The minutes of The Mud House Children's Foundation committee must record clearly the action taken and the reason for the action. The minutes must be signed by the chairperson and the secretary (minute taker).
- The Mud House Children's Foundation Teams will note that giving information to the appropriate authorities to better protect children is not a breach in confidentiality. Wherever possible the family / carer of the child involved should be informed of what information has been shared and to which agency, and for what purpose. Guidance on sharing information with family/guardian is to be sought from the local welfare Office.

Any concerns by a supervisor of potential, suspected or alleged abuse within the community and affecting a The Mud House Children's Foundation participant must be brought to the attention of The Mud House Children's Foundation committee immediately.

Employment:

In order to keep children safe our selection process must reflect our commitment to the protection of children from abuse. Employment is subject to our Child protection standards including background checks and adherence to our Child Protection Policy. In the recruitment of staff:

The Mud House Children's Foundation is committed to good practice in recruitment. We seek to recruit staff who respect and value children and who are committed to the highest standard of personal and professional conduct. This goes beyond simply complying with protocols and legislation, but extends to attempts to ensure that individuals have an appropriate set of personal and professional values and are committed to promoting the safety and well-being of children. Anybody receiving remuneration from The Mud House Children's Foundation will be required to acquire a "Certificate of Good Conduct"

General Guidelines

In communications about children, the following principles apply:

Dignity: The child’s dignity must be preserved at all times. Language must not degrade, victimise or shame the child. In images, children should always be dressed appropriately and should never be depicted in any poses that could be interpreted as sexually provocative.

Accuracy: The portrayal of children must not be manipulated or sensationalised in any way. Images and stories should provide a balanced depiction of the child’s life and circumstances, balancing negatives with empowering images or showing the progress that children are making. Communications should avoid making generalisations which do not accurately reflect the nature of the situation and pictures should not be taken and used out of context. Wherever possible, individuals including children, should be able to give their own accounts allowing them to take control of the information and details that are highlighted.

Privacy: Information should not be shared that could be used to identify a child or might put a child at risk in any way. Children’s real names will never be used in communications shared with the general public and limited information provided about location to protect children’s privacy. External materials must state that names of the children have been changed.

Photographs used in stories should not bear the names of the children unless express permission has been given by the parent. If children belonging to the do not wish their image to be used in any group photograph children should remove themselves from gatherings where photographs are taken.

Addendum 1: The Mud House Children's Foundation ’s Statement of Commitment to Protecting Children and Young People

“I, _____, being a staff, volunteer or associate of The Mud House Children's Foundation have read and have understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Protection Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and agree to implement and promote the procedures and practices contained within this document while working or associating with The Mud House Children's Foundation.

Name: _____ (Please print name)

Job title / role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____