



Safeguarding Children & Persons with Disabilities Policy

Updated June 2020

Introduction

As part of its core values, All Out Africa is committed to ensuring a caring and protective environment for children and people with disabilities. We strongly condemn all forms of abuse and exploitation, be it within or outside of our organisation, and strive to raise awareness, aid prevention, encourage reporting and facilitate response through a variety of measures.

It is especially important for us that children and persons with disabilities feel safe in their association with All Out Africa, whether it be sharing in the activities of the projects we support through volunteer placements, or being assisted through our sponsorship program.

Our policy is based on:

1. All Out Africa's vision, mission and values
2. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
3. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
4. Experience and input of both local, regional and international stakeholders

Scope

We subscribe to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC provides an international framework outlining children's rights to protection from abuse and neglect, discrimination and different forms of exploitation; special consideration is given to children deprived of parental care, children at risk of developing a drug habit, and children who are deprived of their liberty.

We subscribe to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The UNCRPD provides a framework to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. It takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

Our work with children and persons with disabilities places the best interest of the child/person with disabilities as paramount. Every child or person with disabilities has the right to develop to his/her full potential, to quality education, participation and non-discrimination. Everybody has the responsibility to protect children and persons with disabilities from all forms of abuse, abandonment, exploitation, violence and discrimination.

This policy document is binding for All Out Africa members of staff, project partners and volunteers. Every child and persons with disabilities is potentially at risk of abuse and exploitation. Some may be more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, due to various forms of discrimination and marginalisation relating to their socio-economic status, gender, disability, ethnicity, class, or living situation. Therefore it is crucial that every person connected with All Out Africa understands what constitutes abuse, as well as his or her own role and responsibilities in protecting children and persons with disabilities.

Goals of the Children and Persons with Disabilities Protection Policy

This policy aims at:

- Help prevent cases of abuse of children and persons with disabilities in facilities and programs associated with All Out Africa
- Making children and persons with disabilities aware of their rights
- Informing those we directly work with such as children, family and community members, employees, volunteers, and partners (project placement staff, sponsors, and donors) about our Child and Persons with Disabilities Protection Policy and related procedures
- Ensuring staff and volunteers directly involved with children or persons with disabilities understand and follow the procedures in this policy, to contribute to each child/persons with disabilities' development and protection
- Putting in place fair, secure and transparent reporting and referral channels that allow the stakeholders (children, people with disabilities, parents, staff, volunteers) to be heard

Definitions and terminology

- According to the UNCRC, a child is defined as “every human being below the age of 18 years unless national law recognises the age of majority earlier”.
- According to the UNCRPD. “The term persons with disabilities is used to apply to *all* persons with disabilities *including* those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

There are five main categories of abuse:

1. Physical abuse - may involve actions such as hitting, spanking, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, scalding, drowning and suffocating, which is either conducted or allowed by an adult or person in a position of responsibility. It can also mean causing physical harm by fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing, ill health. The incidents may be single or repeated.
2. Sexual abuse – involves forcing or enticing a child or persons with disabilities to take part in sexual activities that are non-consensual. Children under the age of 16 are legally unable to consent and persons with disabilities may be unable to give consent or comprehend the nature of these actions. The activities may involve physical contact of any sexual nature. This may also include involving looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging behaviour in sexually inappropriate ways.

3. Neglect and negligent treatment - is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the child/person with disability 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 individual's health, wellbeing or development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect from harm as much as is feasible.
4. Emotional abuse - is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child/persons with disabilities that adversely affects his or her self-perception and development. It may involve conveying that he or she is worthless, unloved, and inadequate; or imposing inappropriate expectations upon him/her. Acts include restricting movement, ignoring, threatening, scaring, discriminating, scape-goating, corrupting, ridiculing, degrading, bullying, humiliating or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.
5. Financial or material exploitation – is the misuse or mishandling of property, possessions or assets belonging to the child or person with disabilities. It may involve use of money or possessions without consent, under false pretences or through manipulation. Acts include direct theft of money or possessions, or misappropriation such as spending money given for the child/persons with disabilities, or selling, buying or investing their assets/funds; all of these are not for their needs or benefit or in the best interest of the child or person with disabilities.

Respecting the Right to Privacy

The protection of a child or person with disabilities' privacy refers to private data as well as pictures, texts, films etc. about them which are produced for publicity purposes (where any reference is made to any of their personal details). Any information about a child/person with disabilities' history, medical condition and family background must be handled confidentially and with discretion.

All employees and partners who have information on children and persons with disabilities or are creating and distributing publicity material should act according to the following guidelines:

- Obtain written permission from the legal guardian when publishing images and personal information of the child or persons with disabilities who are unable to provide consent themselves
- Do not actively ask children or persons with disabilities to do or say anything that might make them feel displayed as 'objects of pity' (e.g. to speak about their past or ask for donations).
- Consider what information you are sharing with others, be it on social media and in communication materials, or with other partners and agencies. Handle names and information carefully, especially in connection with sensitive information such as the family background, their medical condition and HIV status, place of residence, school or centre they attend, disability or negative behaviour.
- Act with caution when it comes to combining information and visuals when posting to social media or producing communication materials. Ensure that whenever a photo or video shows aspects of a child/persons with disabilities' life it does not reveal their identity, location or personal/sensitive information as discussed above.

Key Parts of this Policy

Awareness and Prevention

There is an open and responsive culture within All Out Africa and its volunteer placements and activity that facilitates awareness and knowledge to protect the child or persons with disabilities, and ensures commitment to prevent and take action against abuse.

- Staff and volunteers are to be given training regarding this policy and to sign their contract/code of conduct stating they understand the policy commit to their responsibilities to prevent any form of abuse or violation of rights of children or persons with disabilities
- Partnership agreements should include information regarding this policy and responsibilities
- All Out Africa Project Coordinator's have the role to raise issues and facilitate referral or resolution of issues, with the Foundation Manager and Director of Volunteer & Student Travel being responsible for any issues they Coordinator feels unable to deal with
- Staff and volunteers should provide a police check or any other appropriate check, and for staff references must be cross-checked
- Supporting awareness raising and capacity building of parents/caregivers and the community respond to and prevent abuse or violation of rights

Reporting and Responding

We aim to take all concerns raised seriously – be it within a project placement, sponsor family, or other program associated with All Out Africa – and take appropriate action. Quick and transparent measures that take local legal responsibilities into account are undertaken.

Any safety concerns should be reported immediately

- Reports are to be made either verbally or in writing to the Social Project Coordinators, or to the Foundation Manager and/or Director of Volunteer & Student Travel.
- Every employee and volunteer is obliged to immediately provide any information he or she has regarding suspicions or evidence of a possible case of abuse towards a child or persons with disabilities. Any adult who withholds information or covers up any kind of abuse is considered an accomplice.
- Children, parents, caregivers, employees, volunteers, project partner staff or other adults who make reports are supported and protected. A person accused of abuse is to be given a fair hearing.
- Appropriate and prompt action is to be taken by the Coordinators, Manager or Directors which is likely to involve:
 - Actions to safeguard the child(ren) or persons with disabilities
 - Disciplinary hearings should the person accused by an All Out Africa staff member or volunteer (as documented in staff contracts and volunteer code of conduct) and appropriate action to be taken
 - Referral to appropriate local organisations to investigate or provide support/counselling
 - Reporting to local authorities
- An incident form is to be completed for all cases reported, is to be signed by the Foundation Manager or Director of Volunteer & Student Travel and are to be kept on file by All Out Africa

Practical Guidance for Volunteers

The following points serve to protect volunteers and children/persons with disability and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. This is not a complete list. The basic understanding is that you will all avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute bad practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

Volunteers will:

- Treat children, young people and persons with disability with respect, listen to and value their ideas and opinions
- Encourage, support and provide a positive and fun environment for activities
- Listen and take relevant and appropriate action to protect their well being
- Report any violations of these standards of behaviour immediately to the All Out Africa Project Coordinators or to any All Out Africa Managers/Directors
- Adhere to the guidelines below when photos/videos of children and persons with disability and sharing on social media
- Be a role model, following appropriate behaviours and setting examples of what is good behaviour whilst at projects, for example no inappropriate language to be used
- If children or persons with disability need assistance with more personal activities, then to conduct these in a more open environment and if possible with another adult present
- Consider high five's and thumbs up rather than initiating physical contact such as hugs
- Encourage and respect the relationship between the parent/teacher/caregiver and child/ persons with disability – these are stable and consistent figures in their lives
- Support the learning or caring activities taking place and not distract the children/ persons with disability, or undermine the project staff
- Be careful of the questions asked, some children or persons with disability will not have parents/families or wish to talk about some topics

Volunteers will NOT:

- Pinch, hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse a child or persons with disability
- Interact with any child or persons with disability in a manner which is inappropriate, sexually provocative, or develop physical or sexual relationships with a child or persons with disability
- Seek to use or manipulate a child or persons with disability in any way to meet their own needs or in a way that is not in the best interest of the child or persons with disability
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour and language with a child or persons with disability
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, culture, vulnerability or sexuality
- Develop 'special' relationships with specific children or persons with disability, which may involve giving gifts or showing favouritism in front of others
- Remove children or persons with disability from the project sites for any reasons without permission from the All Out Africa Project Coordinator and the management of facility (e.g. schools, centre or neighbourhood care points)
- Not work alone or unsupervised with children and persons with disability and to report to the All Out Africa Project Coordinator when your supervisor is absent
- Cause emotional distress and harm, such as calling names, criticising, belittling or degrading children or persons with disability
- Help with things of a personal nature that the child or persons with disability are able to do on their own
- Do not make promises that you cannot fulfil – such as promising to come back next year
- Ignore and not report any concerns or suspicions regarding abuse or neglect

Photography and Video Code of Conduct

Children love having their photograph taken, but we ask you to respect their right to privacy and for persons with disability also.

You are welcome to ask the child / persons with disability if you can take their photograph, or also consider asking an adult responsible for them if you feel they are unable to give conformed consent. These photos are to be for personal use only.

If you wish to use photographs or videos you have taken for fundraising or awareness-raising purposes, please discuss beforehand with the All Out Africa Project Coordinator or Foundation Manager.

When taking photos or video, you agree:

- To seek informed consent from the child or persons with disability and/or their parents/ guardian prior to a recording, photograph or image being taken
- To explain how and where this material will be used
- Not to use any personal details, e.g. names, on any public platform, social networking sites, webpage or communication materials or identifying information such as the pre-school, school or centre they attend, place of residence, medical information and HIV status, disability or family background
- Not to post or publish photographs or videos of children or persons with disabilities in such a manner that might led to that child being identified or put at risk
- Not to take images that could be perceived as sexually provocative or degrading