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ACI CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

Able Child Initiatives is a local NGO that is limited by guarantee. It advocates for the rights of children with disabilities as well as their families. One of its objectives is to improve the lives of children and young people with disabilities. The other is to ensure protection of children with disabilities from abuse and exploitation of all forms.

1.1 Legal frameworks:

The rights of a child are enshrined under article three of the UN Convention on the rights of a child and the basic principle is protection against harm this is derived from the analogical term “in the interest of the child”

ACI recognizes that child abuse may occur in all places regardless of culture, race, sex or disability.

In a bid to protect the child with disability, ACI uses available human rights instruments and the relevant legislations such as the UN convention on the rights of a child, the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2008), The Persons with Disabilities Act no.9 of 2010, the constitution of the republic of Tanzania 1977, the law of the Child Act 2009 cap 17 advocates for child protection.

In recognition of the special needs of children with disabilities, ACI sets this policy to specifically address the rights of children with disability as they are enshrined in CRPD

1.2 Why the policy:

Expectations in dealing with issues of child protection and provision of guidance of staff and third parties.

The starting point for an open approach to promoting the wellbeing of children with our societies based on the concept from the child rights convention 1989, taking the best interest of the child as the basis for all behavior.

Is part of the employment contract and its contravention warrants disciplinary action after thorough investigation/inquiries have been conducted.

Forms part of the partnership agreement and adherence to it is a pre requisite for networking and collaboration.

1.3 Definition and terminologies:

a child according to the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania 1977 and the law of the Child No.21 of 2009 Section 4(i) is one who is below the age of 18 years.

a child with disability according to the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities is one who because of physical, mental sensory or intellectual disability cannot effectively interact with others on an equal basis.

----staff means and include employees of the organization.

Partner includes the parent support groups, and related NGOs with whom we work with.

---child abuse: the universal categories of child abuse (see. the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child, United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 constitution and the Law of the Child Act no.21 of 2009 sections 13 and 17.

- Sexual abuse: actual or threatened sexual exploitation of a child including all forms of sexual activity such as rape, defilement, pornography and incest.

Physical injury:

Actual or physical harm to any child or a failure to prevent physical harm or suffering.

Neglect:

The failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger including cold, starvation, locking up, failure to carry out important aspects of care resulting in impairment of the child's health, growth and development.

Emotional abuse:

Persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves emotional ill treatment.

Exploitation;

Using a child for economic gain, or performing work that may be hazardous, or that interferes with the child's growth and development. This includes educational programs that are focused on production rather than acquisition of skills, asking child to perform excessive chores and tasks, asking children under the minimum labor age to perform paid labor, and keeping a child out of an educational facility to perform other tasks.

1.4 Policy basis:

ACI bases its work and policies on principles stipulated in the UN Convention on the rights of the child, the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and subsequently in the resolution A world fit for children, African charter on the rights and welfare of a child, the Law of the Child 2009 cap.9 sec.(3), the national development plan

2025 and Persons with Disability Act no.9 of 2010. These standards clearly stipulate the principles of putting children with disabilities first, protecting them as well as their participation. ACI aims at safeguarding children with Disabilities from all forms of abuse and exploitation in line with article19 of the convention on the rights of the child.

1.5 Policy goal:

The overall goal of this policy is to protect children with disabilities from all forms of discrimination, exploitation and abuse and to improve their livelihood

1.6 Policy scope:

This policy applies to all staff of ACI, partners, volunteers, parent support groups, child rights clubs and all its beneficiaries this policy will be implemented within a period of five years, after which it will be subjected to review/amendment.

1.7 Policy statement:

Able Child Initiatives considers child abuse as an unacceptable behavior that hinders chances for children with disabilities to achieve their full potentials for their growth and development. ACI is committed to ensuring that in all its activities and those of its partners, all necessary steps are taken to protect the rights of the child with disabilities and to ensure their wellbeing.

The code of conduct and the underlying principles are to be respected by all ACI staff, partners, donors and those visiting projects for whatever reasons including volunteers, consultants, journalists and parent representatives.

The child protection policy takes into account local concepts of normal adult child interaction, culture, religion, and local laws except in case where these are deemed to be contrary to the best interest of the child.

1.8 Policy aims:

- To raise awareness to all staff, partners and other people who come into contact with Children.
- To denounce and react to rampant violation of children's rights and abuses.
- To lay out recruitment procedures and best practices.
- Train staff and partners on child protection matters.
- To set standards and procedures in dealings that concern children under ACI and those outside it.
- To set a conscious environment where children's welfare and welfare is taken as paramount.

2.0 POLICY:

1. Reference is made to this policy applying to all children with disabilities we work with and for.
2. Children with disabilities have a role to play, thus respect and responsibility are most emphasized.
3. ACI incorporates child protection into its way of working, strategy and structure; Where the slogan CHILDREN FIRST is the order of the day.
4. In all our work, children with disabilities welfare are paramount. Our organization cultural values respect the dignity of children with disabilities and young people. ACI recognizes a holistic approach including their physical, emotional, social, material and psychological wellbeing of the child with disabilities.

5. All staff members, volunteers, partners, and interns working with children with disabilities will be recruited, trained and they will work under tight but professional supervision.
6. All allegations of child abuse will be handled and appropriate steps taken to collaborate fully with statutory and voluntary agencies concerned with child abuse.
7. We recognize that child abuse takes many forms including physical, emotional \psychological and sexual. Our procedures and processes take into account for the different forms of child abuse.
8. All ACI employees and activists have a duty to act if children with disabilities are being abused and their rights violated.
9. ACI commitment to protect children with disabilities from all forms of abuse will take the following means:
 - (A) Awareness creation: ACI will ensure that all staff, volunteers and partners are aware of the problem of child abuse and all risks to children with disabilities. That ACI staff receives regular training on child protection issues and of their obligations under the policy, including mandatory reporting of concerns or allegations for child abuse. Training is included in compulsory courses delivered at induction and before any posting.
 - (B) Prevention: ACI will ensure that through awareness and good practice that staff and other stakeholders minimize on the risks of child exploitation and abuse.
 - (C) Reporting: ACI will ensure that staff and other stakeholders have clarity on what steps to take when concerns arise regarding children with disabilities lives. ACI will enhance internal procedures for handling complaints relating to child exploitation and abuse. The procedures outline obligations and responsibilities for reporting on and managing of concerns about inappropriate behavior. Its mandatory for ACI staff to report immediately concerns relating to child abuse and child exploitation by any one covered by the policy.
 - (D) Responding: we will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children with disabilities where concerns arise regarding child exploitation.
10. All those coming into contact, working with children with disabilities will be properly recruited, trained and subjected to appropriate supervision.
11. Where children with disabilities between the ages of three to eighteen years have to be transported by a car, or any other transport, it is desirable that there should be more than one adult passenger in the vehicle.
12. Any member of staff who is concerned about the welfare of the child and the behavior of a member of staff or volunteer must report their concern to a member of ACI regarding children.
13. ACI'S management undertakes efforts to remain alert on unusual and inappropriate behaviors on the part of staff and volunteers towards children with disabilities or vice versa. In case suspicion or allegation of abuse is beyond the ACI's management capacity to handle, it should seek advice from the council of management or the probation officer.
14. In the selection and appointment of staff and volunteers who may have access to children with disabilities, full references will be taken up from the local council

- Officers or the child protection officer. If the information revealed by the exercise gives any cause for concern at all, the chairperson of the council of management will be consulted before any appointment is made.
15. Health and safety regulations must always be adhered to (Details of this are enshrined in ACI's Health and Safety Policy).
 16. The council of management of ACI is responsible for confirming the child protection policy. And the senior management is responsible for compliance.
 17. ACI recognizes that the girl child with disabilities is vulnerable to abuse and that they require special protection. ACI believes that its aim of empowering the girl child with disability is the foundation of enabling them to be less vulnerable to abuse and exploitation of all forms. A key element of our programme policy is that girls build confidence and self-esteem to reduce their exposure to exploitation and abuse.
 18. ACI will work actively with all stakeholders to spread best practices in the protection of all children with disabilities.
 19. All suspicions and allegations of abuse and exploitation will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
 20. All members of staff, volunteers and other stakeholders will be made to understand that the welfare of a child with disabilities is paramount.

2.1 Guiding principles.

- (a) Recognition of children's interest: Tanzania is a signatory to the UN convention on the rights of a child, and ACI is committed to upholding the rights and obligations of the convention. ACI recognizes that some children, such as children with disabilities and children living in areas impacted by disaster (natural or conflict based) are particularly vulnerable.
- (b) Sharing responsibility for child protection: to effectively manage risks to children, ACI requires the active support and cooperation of its staff, volunteers, affiliated organizations and all other stakeholders implementing ACI's activities. Contractors and NGOS must meet the terms of the child protection policy and will be held accountable, through contracts and audits, for complying with it. ACI also encourages awareness of child protection issues among local and international partners.
- (c) Child participation: in all our service delivery to children with disabilities, child participation will take a lead. They will be consulted and encouraged to take part in the design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programs.
- (d) Zero tolerance of child abuse: child abuse is not tolerated by ACI, nor is possession or access to child pornography. ACI actively manages the risks of child abuse and trains its staff on their obligations. ACI will not knowingly engage, directly or indirectly, anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children with disabilities, nor fund any organization which does not meet ACI'S child protection compliance standards in their operations and activities.
- (e) Risk management approach: while it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child abuse and exploitation, careful management can reduce the incidents of child abuse and exploitation. This policy introduces risk assessments and treatments for a range of recognized risks to children

2.2 Policy implementation.

- (I) Use of appropriate communication systems:
- (II) ACI's guidelines on appropriate use of its communication systems (without access to child pornography). Using agency systems to access child pornography is inappropriate and is dealt with promptly including reporting to relevant law enforcement agencies.
- (III) Ensure effective recruitment and screening.
- (IV) ACI's internal recruitment processes already employ stringent screening measures to ensure inappropriate persons are not employed by the organization. These include criminal record checks and background checks on all successful candidates before they begin work. Further rigorous screening (including in depth background checks and interviews with professional and personal associates) is conducted before appointment. ACI will continue to evaluate and improve these processes. Additional screening measures are incorporated into selection process for ACI positions working with children. These include: verbal referee checks and interview questions.
- (V) Effective internal procedures for handling child related issues.
- (VI) ACI has enhanced internal procedures for handling complaints related to all types of child abuse. The procedures outline obligations and responsibilities for reporting on and managing of concerns about inappropriate behavior. It is mandatory for ACI staff to report immediately concerns relating to child abuse and by any one covered by the policy.
- (VII) Increase awareness of child rights and child protection. A key step in reducing risks to children when ACI is delivering services is to increase awareness of risk management.
- (VIII) Ensure coordinated child rights policy implementation.
- (IX) To ensure coordinated implementation of the policy, all staff members and volunteers working directly with children are expected to act in the position of a child protection officer (CPO). These C.P.O.'s responsibilities will include promoting child protection throughout the society, coordinating training for staff, monitoring internal and external policy compliance and coordinating policy reviews. The C.P.O.'s also will serve as the central contact point for queries (internal and external) about child abuse and child protection as well as child exploitation.

2.3 Good child working practices.

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behavior in order to protect themselves from false allegations. Below are common examples of how to create a positive culture and climate for the children we work for and with:

- (a) Building balanced relationship based on mutual trust.

- (b) Respecting the right for children of having a say in discussion and decision making.
- (c) Offering children the opportunity to express their grievances, their opinions or complaints about their peer group leaders or guardians.
- (d) Making sport enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- (e) Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away for the day or night, they should always be accompanied by a male or female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- (f) Always working in an open environment, avoiding private or an observed situations and encouraging open communication.
- (g) Treat all young people/children with disabilities with respect and dignity.
- (h) Always putting the welfare of children and young people first.
- (i) Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with players (eg it's not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child and to share a room with them).
- (j) Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines by the programed coordinator. If it is difficult to maintain handy positions when the child is constantly moving, young people should always be consulted and their agreement should be gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.

A written consent should be emphasized in case of photos, surgery etc

- (k) Keeping up to date technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- (l) Involving parents/careers wherever possible. For example encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure that parents, teachers, coaches or official work in pairs.
- (m) Ensuring that at tournament or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- (n) Being an exemplary role model.
- (o) Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- (p) Recognizing the developmental needs and capacity of young people with disabilities as well as children by avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- (q) Securing parental consent in writing to act, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid /other medical treatment.
- (r) Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- (s) Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

3.0 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHILD PROTECTION:

All staff, partners, volunteers and parent representatives must follow these rules to prevent, stop and report any and all abuse to children with disabilities in Tanzania.

Dos:

1. Know the code of conduct.
2. Treat children with disabilities with respect and dignity regardless of race, colour, sex, religion and nationality.
3. Be aware of children's vulnerability: generally children with disabilities are vulnerable and susceptible to child abuse, thus requiring special protection.
4. be aware of situation that may present risks (being alone with children during therapy session, taking film/photos or interview for work purpose/reporting).
5. Plan and organize the work, work place or visit to manage risks
6. As far as possible, be visible in working with children or visiting children
7. Participate in achieving a culture of openness to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
8. Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior does not go un challenged
9. Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.
10. Empower children – discuss with them their rights
11. Report concerns or incidences of child abuse to designated Person and authority

Don'ts

1. Do not develop physical or sexual relationship with children
2. Do not act in ways that may be abusive to children
3. Do not spend time with children alone away from others
4. Do not condone or participate in behavior of children that are illegal
5. Do not behave physically in a manner that is inappropriate eg fondling, kiss, or touch children in culturally insensitive
6. Do not administer corporal punishment
7. Do not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children
8. Do not discriminate against children
9. Do not employ children to do domestic work as maids, house boys and casual laborer
10. Do not allow a child to be systemically neglected

4.0 RECRUITMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS:

Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All volunteers/staff should complete an application form. The application form will enlist information about an applicant's past and self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the criminal records bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact or in writing.

-Evidence of identity should be provided. For example identity card, passport or driving license with a photo.

-There should be intensive training and orientation to volunteers regarding children with disabilities.

-volunteers should have been cleared off the criminal record and make agreement before joining ACI to abide by the best practices.

-partners should also abide by the policy.

4.1 Interview and induction.

All ACI employees and volunteers will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees should receive formal and informal induction during which:

- a. A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures)
- b. Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- c. The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- d. They should sign up to ACI's code of Ethics and conduct.
- e. Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.

4.2 Responding to allegations.

It is not the responsibility of any one working in ACI, in a paid or un paid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse and exploitation has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concern through contact with appropriate authorities. A child lead who here will be the Matron will be working closely with the head teacher of ACI Inclusive Centre in making sure that any abuse or anything related to it for quick action

ACI will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague, a guest or a beneficiary is, or may be abusing and exploiting a child.

4.3 Confidentiality.

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned parties. Information should be handled disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This includes the following people:

- a. The child protection officer
- b. The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- c. The person making the allegation.
- d. Social services/police.
- e. The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)
- f. The probation officer

5.0 CHILDREN AND MEDIA:

Able Child Initiatives recognizes the media and technology as a necessary component in raising awareness and reporting, these include; Photography, video coverage/film, internet. Able Child Initiatives shall undertake:

1. Seek consent of a child or her parents before taking any coverage or photograph
2. Not to promise returns for coverage of images
3. Take images of children that are dignified and respectful
4. Ensure that images of children could not be interpreted as sexual or condone any other situation of abuse.
5. protect the safety and privacy of children and their families by not using identifiable images
6. The images and messages may only be used with consent of ACI
7. Journalists, reporters, photographers, film makers and other media/marketing professionals must also abide by this code of conduct

6.0 REPORTING PRINCIPLES: PROTECTION AND RESPONSE:

- Take any concern serious
- Take steps to ensure the protection of the child who is the subject of concern
- Support children, staff or others who raise the concern
- Act appropriately and effectively- staff should not start investigation when the allegation is raised this is the job of managers

6.1 Principles.

1. The dignity and rights of a child are to be respected in every circumstance.
2. In interviewing and reporting of children, special attention is to be paid to every child's right to privacy and confidentiality.
3. Protections will be done in the best interest of a child.
4. While trying to determine the best interest of a child, the child's rights to have their views taken into account are to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
5. Those closest to the children situation and best able assess it are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reporting.
6. Do not publish a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

7.0 GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING CHILDREN:

1. Do not harm to any child, avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, that place a child in danger or expose a child to humiliation or that reactivate a Childs' pain and grief from traumatic events.
2. Do not discriminate in choosing children to interview because of sex, age, religion, status, educational back ground or physical abilities.

3. Ensure that the child or guardian knows that the reporters are talking to them and explaining the
4. Obtain permission from the child and his or her guardian for all interviews, videotaping and when possible for documentary photographs when possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing.

7.1 Guidelines for reporting on children.

1. Do not further stigmatize any child; Avoid categorizations or description that expose a child to negative reprisals
2. Always provide an accurate context for the child's story
3. Avoid further using negative descriptions like lame, limping, crippled etc
4. Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of the child.

8.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY:

In ensuring proper implementation of the activities in the child protection, Able Child Initiatives has instituted a mechanism of capturing and tracking the outcome of such a policy. The following areas will be monitored;

1. Awareness raising to staff and partners who are in direct contact with children with disability
2. Conduct of staff in relation to dealing with children\
3. Understanding and signing the code of conduct by staff , volunteers, visitors and other ;partners
4. Establish relevant forms for capturing challenges, good practice and other suggestions.
5. Include the policy agenda in the normal ACI frame work to review the progress of this policy.

8.1 This policy will be reviewed every after 5 years or earlier if need arises.

