

****Child Protection Policy****

****ETU Foundation****

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****1. Background****

- A Child Protection Policy provides a framework of principles, standards and guidelines on which to base individual and organizational practice in relation to areas such as:
 - Creating a 'child safe' and 'child friendly' organization (in relation to environmental safety as well as protection against physical, psychological and sexual abuse)
 - Prevention of abuse
 - Guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behavior/attitude
 - Personnel recruitment and training

- Recognizing, reporting and reacting to allegations of abuse
- Guidelines for communications regarding children

2. Rationale

- Any NGO should have a child protection policy if its direct or indirect beneficiaries include individuals

under the age of 18;

- As a local NGO working for the rights of children, it is our duty to ensure that our promotion of children's rights includes specifically protecting children from harm as well as deliberate abuse within organizations intended for their benefit. This policy will assist in fulfilling this duty.
- Organizations working with vulnerable children have been, are and will continue to be vulnerable to harboring abuse until the issues are brought into the open.
- Organizations without protection policies, guidelines and systems are more vulnerable to false or malicious accusations of abuse.
- Without proper policies, guidelines and procedures in place, allegations of abuse, whether founded or unfounded, can destroy an organization's reputation. This will have serious implications for fundraising (thus undermining an organization's entire portfolio of work, even beyond the scope of the particular project concerned) as well as damaging the reputation of the NGO sector as a whole.
- Because the potential for child abuse exists throughout the world, ETU Foundation, is ideally placed to promote awareness, sensitization and standards of child protection and to engage in capacity building on this important issue.

3. Objectives

The objective of this Child Protection Policy (CPP) is to prevent, address and fight all violence against children. Therefore ETU Foundation finds it important to have a policy that:

- Increases understanding of staff members working for ETU Foundation on the vulnerability of children.
- States the behavior expected and actions to be taken towards staff members of ETU Foundation violating the rights of children including children with disabilities.
- Provides guidelines towards the use of photographs and films of children in projects supported by ETU Foundation that might harm the child.
- Supports training and awareness raising amongst project stakeholders on violence against children.
- Supports advocacy on the topic of violence against children and the need of child protection policies for them on an international and national level.

**4. Who does the Policy Apply To?*

The CPP applies to all staff who works with the children at projects, and it is part of their contractual obligations. It is also a condition of placement for all volunteers who work for the ETU Foundation or in our name.

ETU Foundation staff, those with paid full and part-time positions within the organization are bound to the commitment not only to abide by, but also to

understand and promote the policies, guidelines, principles and practice of children's protection in a child rights context. It is crucial that the staff of ETU Foundation uphold the highest standards of professional and ethical behavior while working with children, because the actions of the staff members reflect the principles of the organization.

****5. ****A****reas of CPP to be ****C****onsidered****

****5.1. ****V****ulnerability of ****C****hildren to ****V****iolence****

Children are often marginalized within families and communities. This result in the fact that they are less connected to people, government and non government services that could protect them from violence. When children are not regarded or regarded as less important in family life, communities in school, in the law, by health care professionals and in general policy making, then it becomes easier for perpetrators to violate their rights and more difficult for the victims of violence to protect themselves. Subsequently it is harder to find justice after their rights have been violated.

****5.2 ****Child Protection ****a****t Homes****

For many families in poor and middle countries children are their financial security for the future. Their investment in their children in food, healthcare and education is partly in the hope that the child will provide for them when they grow old. If a family does not recognize the potential of a child and fears that this child will be a financial burden for the rest of their lives, they are sometimes less inclined to invest in their child. This can lead Sexual violence against children within the family has always been a big problem in being reported and recognized. When a child is regarded as less important by the family or has difficulty of communicating with the family because he/she does not speak, sexual abuse has a higher chance of remaining unnoticed for a longer time. The taboo and shame that is surrounded around sexual violence makes that when family members do know they sometimes do not report, fearing that the blame will be put on the family or on the child.

****5.3. ****Protection ****o****f Children ****i****n ****t****heir Communities****

The link between the family and their immediate community is of high importance. Most families depend on their immediate community in their daily lives for financial and social reasons. The response of a family to their child is linked to the ideas they believe in and these are closely connected to the ideas the community has about children with disabilities. Lack of money to help their children and protect their children is an issue for many families in developing countries. To ensure adequate protection of children more financial resources may be required and the lack of these resources may increase the risk of violence.

Poverty however does not directly lead to violence. In situations where families are poor the willingness of the immediate community to contribute to child protection is crucial. When a child is accepted as part of the community, the community often helps to protect the child from harm. Working on the relationships that the families of children with disabilities have with their immediate communities requires little resources and provides effective protection of children with disabilities from violence.

****5.4. ****Protection ****o****f Children ****i****n Schools****

Children will go to schools. Specialized schools for children with disabilities should be provided by the government. Creating an environment through child protection systems where violence is not tolerated and openly discussed, can significantly help to break the cycle of violence that might be "created" by staff and older students. The school community needs awareness about disabilities and impairments in general and specifically about the right of children specially children with disabilities to be protected from violence, on

equal basis with others.

Lack of funds for transport to get to school means that children sometimes have to walk long distances with the risk of facing violence on the road. Some children never reach school because of lack of money for transportation.

5.5. Protection of Children from Child Labor

Children might be exploited in child labor, especially in situations of (extreme) poverty. Children in general are often and easily exploited as most of them are unaware of their rights and find it hard to speak up for themselves against adults or (stronger) peers. This is even more the case when the child in question has a disability and is physically or mentally not able to voice his or her concerns. Children are cheap labor and less likely to claim their payment or other rights. They often work long hours for little pay in conditions that are lacking minimum safety regulations.

5.6. Child Protection of Children in the Justice System, Through Law and Policies

There are different conventions, laws and treaties that protect the rights of all children and of children with disabilities specifically. In addition to article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has a stand-alone provision on children with disabilities (Article 7); additionally, the incorporation of the views of children with disabilities is a general principle (Article 3).

History has shown that there is a need to mention children specifically. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child is for all children, in the implementation of the convention children with disabilities are often forgotten. In practice this means that courts are not accessible for children. When children manage to get their case to court, they still might not have access to justice because, for example, they are speaking a language that is not acknowledged by the court (sign language), or because they are considered lacking intellect. In many cases police officers and other people working in the justice system are equally like other parts of the society, lacking the belief that there is a need to protect children from violence. When perpetrators are considered more important to society, persecuting them for violating the right of a child, is then often regarded as a harm to society instead of a benefit.

Government policies that favor the inclusion of children into all spheres of life can help in protecting children from violence. The absence of these policies essentially equates to the government not caring about the lives of children. When policies are available these can be used to lobby for the protection of children and to find justice when the rights of children are violated. In case policies on protection and inclusion of children are lacking, there is a need to build awareness of the government on the need to have policies that include children.

6. The Role of ETU Foundation in Child Protection

The CPP for ETU Foundation will work on different levels-

1. Child protection in the community: ETU Foundation work on children issues in the community. Addressing the issue of violence against children within the community is more complex because the projects often work with many different organizations and structures that help in the development and rehabilitation of the child. Having a policy within the partner organizations will not be enough. Therefore our partner organizations will be stimulated and supported to train community programs and support them in developing policies and activities that would help the protection of children in the communities where they live.

These trainings will include issues on:

- Schooling and making sure schools protect children from violence, within the school hours and in lodges or other houses where children stay when the school is far from their home. j
- Support that can be given to a child, its family and rehabilitation workers, on community level.
- Awareness raising that can be done on the level of the family and the community.
- Awareness raising should be done with the police and members of the justice system. (Referrals made to the justice system should benefit the child and not cause more trauma to the child) In order for a case of a child to be taken serious, police and the justice system must be disability, gender and child friendly. This will need:
 - Legal measures to punish and remove perpetrators from the home and ensure that the child is not deprived from the family and can continue to live a safe and healthy environment.
 - Accessible and safe, disability and child friendly complaint mechanism.
 - Access to the necessary communication, physical and other support to enable them to participate in legal proceedings.

The approach will follow a community protection approach, working to empower children to protect themselves without giving them the sole responsibility for their own protection.

2. Working on advocacy for the inclusion of children with disabilities into child protection: ETU Foundation is known for its work in lobby, advocacy and mainstreaming on national levels, EU level and at the UN. In our work on all these levels our organizations will take a proactive role in raising the issue of violence against children with disabilities. At the moment most child protection policies do not mention children with disabilities and if they are mentioned there are often no guidelines explaining why children with disabilities are more vulnerable to violence and what considerations have to be made in order to protect children with disabilities from violence. Therefore the LIGHT FOR THE WORLD confederation is committed to contribute at all the levels of its lobby and advocacy work to child protection that is inclusive of children with disabilities.

****7. ****ETU Foundation Child Protection Team****

- The child protection team will consist of ETU Foundation staff led by the Executive Director. The team will consist of one person from each project and one person from the Executive Committee. Additional staff and consultants might be involved in activities on an implementation level.
- The child protection team will lead the process to develop a plan for the implementation phase of the child protection policy.
- The child protection team will follow up and report about the progress made in child protection by requesting information from project offices annually.
- The child protection team will be involved in the development of training for staff on the topic of child protection and follow up on the knowledge of staff members about the child protection policy.
- The child protection team will support the development of "good practices" and report about it in the organization's newsletter and will support project teams when they would like to report on successes made in the field of protecting children for external publications.

- In case of violence against a child in one of the projects or by ETU Foundation staff the child protection team will follow up on the case in collaboration with other responsible staff and report through Executive Committee about the outcomes.
- The child protection team will follow up on activities of ETU Foundation to promote child protection of children with disabilities.
- The child protection team will review the child protection policy at least once in five years.

****The End****