



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Statement

Connect Network is steadfast in its devotion to protecting children at risk and ensuring that they can experience quality care and nurturing relationships. **Connect Network** has put in place guidelines for protecting children to ensure the wellbeing of children impacted by the work of the **Connect Network** board, staff, volunteers, affiliates, partners and visitors. The policy and related procedures should always be in line with any South African legislation pertaining to the care of children.

Policy Monitoring and Review

Policy review two-yearly. Records of the review and acceptance of the updated policy must be reflected in staff and board meeting minutes.

Scope

This policy and the related procedures are compulsory and apply to all board members, employees, volunteers and students/interns of **Connect Network**. A breach of these procedures will lead to non-compliance consequences as outlined in this policy.

Intent

It is in the interest of **Connect Network** to clearly outline the legislative requirements, responsibilities and expectations of both **Connect Network**, as the employer, and the employees of **Connect Network**.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This child protection policy and procedures was developed as a working document in line with the **Connect Network's** vision: "together for women and children at risk."

As part of affiliation to **Connect Network** and as partners of **Connect Network**, it is expected that affiliate organisations and partners working with children have child protection procedures in place and follow the provisions of this policy and good practice guidelines as stipulated by **Connect Network**.

Connect Network urges each of its affiliate organisations and partners to develop its own child protection procedures that will protect children from abuse and create confidence in those donating resources to those organisations.

Connect Network encourages projects to give respect and dignity to all the children it has contact with or care for.

Connect Network expects all adults to praise children for good behaviour, explain decisions to them and listen to them.

Although **Connect Network** staff members, board directors and volunteers do not deal with children on a daily basis, there are occasions when they visit an organisation or are involved in a child focused initiative. For this purpose it is important for the organisation to have a policy in place, which provides principles of good practice, creates awareness, and informs behaviour when interacting directly with children.

Any breach of the policy, procedures or behaviour and child discipline guidelines will result in non-compliance procedures.

1.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Connect Network is in partnership with Viva. Viva is a global movement of Christians passionately concerned for children at risk, committed to every child having the opportunity to become all that God intends. Viva is a member of the coalition of international non-governmental organisations, known as, 'Setting the Standard', which have adopted a common approach to child protection. This policy has originally been written in line with the standards set out in the 'Setting the Standard' (2003) and the appropriate South African legislation.

The following conventions and legislation are considered in the policy:

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, especially Section 28
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Children's Act no 38 of 2005 and the Children's Amendment Act 41 Of 2007 (hereafter the Children's Act)
- South Africa Family Violence Act
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, no. 32 of 2007

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purposes of this Child Protection Policy, all references to:

'child', 'children', 'young person', 'young people', 'adolescent' and 'adolescents' – whether singular or plural – are used interchangeably and are taken to refer to those under the age of 18 years, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children's Act.

'Workers', 'staff', 'volunteers', are used interchangeably and are taken to refer to anyone interacting with children on behalf of **Connect Network**.



1.3 NEED FOR AND SCOPE OF POLICY

A child protection policy provides guidelines for creating a safe and positive environment for children and, although no standards or processes can offer complete protection for children, following these standards and implementing a policy minimises the risk to children from abuse and exploitation.

Child protection policies will help protect children.

A child protection policy clarifies what procedures an organisation should have in place to ensure protection of children. It sets out standards of behaviour for project staff, volunteers and visitors when they are around children and what to do if they notice, or are told about, inappropriate behaviour in others.

Child protection policies will help protect workers.

A child protection policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates the organisation's commitment to safeguard children from harm. Child protection policies will help move the organisation towards best practice in this area and deter those who would wish to abuse children from joining the organisation.

Child protection policies will help protect the organisation.

This Child Protection Policy sets out:

- **Connect Network's** principles for the protection of children
- **Connect Network's** expectations in terms of behaviour and good practice for working with children and young people
- **Connect Network's** guidelines for responding appropriately if abuse of a child is alleged, disclosed, discovered or suspected
- **Connect Network's** procedures for screening of persons who may work in the life space of children under the **Connect** umbrella
- **Connect Network's** procedures for dealing with concerns and allegations as well as general child protection matters such as advocacy and record-keeping

1.4 POLICY PRINCIPLES

We believe that:

- Child protection is both an individual and a corporate responsibility.
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation and inequalities should be challenged.
- All children should be encouraged to fulfil their potential.
- The safeguarding and welfare of children is paramount.
- Everyone must take precautions and responsibility to help create a safe place for children and support their care and protection. This begins with everyone being well informed and aware of child protection issues.
- Openness must be encouraged about concerns relating to child protection matters because child abuse thrives on secrecy.
- Organisations and networks owe a duty of care to the children with whom they work and a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for the children in their care.
- “The best interest of the child” is of paramount importance and will be prioritised in all matters related to child protection.
- Children with disabilities may need special support and resource to ensure that they receive the necessary assistance to meet their needs and to develop their full potential.

1.5 DECLARATION

Connect Network is committed to the protection of *every* child so that they can become all that God intends.

As Christians, our profound concern for children at risk flows from God Himself. We affirm that children born or unborn are created in the image of God and therefore have intrinsic worth. We believe that every child is born equal in God’s sight with unique talents.

We base these beliefs on the following verses:

- Matthew 18:2-6 (children are part of God's Kingdom)
- Mark 10:14 (children need love and acceptance)
- Psalm 127:4-5 (children are like arrows in a man's hand)
- Psalm 139:14 (children are fearfully and wonderfully made)

We commit ourselves to listen to, believe in and act for children. We will work with children to find ways to protect them from harm.

We commit ourselves to speak up for children at risk in every possible arena, be that in their local communities, or in the assemblies of the powerful who make decisions that profoundly affect children's lives.

We believe children have the right to speak and be heard and that involving them in their own protection has been demonstrated to be an effective way of bringing about an improvement in their protection.

We accept the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child as a basis for our understanding of the rights of children globally. This child protection policy applies to all children, whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, and whatever type of family they come from. We commit to work towards what is best for every child.

We commit to obtain agreement of this policy from our staff, volunteers and board members. This is done by ensuring that all role-players review the policy and sign a Personal Commitment Child Protection Form (Appendix 2) stating their commitment to the principles and procedures as set out in the policy. Furthermore, this policy will be reviewed at least every second year or at earlier points if it is felt to be necessary.

2. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

All staff associated with **Connect Network** need to be aware of and understand the various forms of abuse, as defined below.

According to the Children's Act (no. 38 of 2005), abuse, in relation to a child, means any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child, and includes

- Assaulting a child or inflicting and other form of deliberate injury to a child;
- Sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused;
- Bullying by another child;
- A labour practice that exploits a child; or
- Exposing or subjecting a child to behaviours that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is the actual or likely injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child. It includes hitting, beating with a stick or other implement, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning or suffocating. This could result in bruises, burns, bite marks, cuts, head injury, whiplash, internal injuries and broken bones. It may also include the situation where a carer deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after. This may involve forcing the child to work in an unsafe way/environment, or depriving the child of the necessities of food, water, sunlight or air.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. It involves encouraging, forcing or enticing a child to take part in or observe sexual activities that they may or may not truly comprehend. It includes any action with sexual intent towards children such as touching a child's genitals, asking a child to touch the genitals of others, encouraging the child to watch or take part in pornography, or having sex with the child whether or not they appear to be consenting. It involves the child not being able to give informed consent and may violate social taboos or family roles. It includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activity involving children, such as pornography and prostitution. It is criminal behaviour to involve children in any sexual behaviours or activities.

NEGLECT

Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs or failure to protect a child from danger. It is any action that deliberately neglects the right to live, the right to learn, the right to participate and the right to speak. Neglect is likely to result in serious impairment to the child's health and development. It may involve a carer failing to protect a child from exposure to cold or starvation or failure to carry out important aspects of care. Special consideration needs to be made for children with disabilities. Caregivers need to provide care that considers the special care needs of the child.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the actual or likely persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection of a child, which is likely to have an adverse effect on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It includes any actions (gestures, word and behaviours) that deliberately cause children to feel afraid, anxious, in danger, corrupted, exploited, annoyed or discouraged. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved and inadequate. It involves neglecting to give love and attention, not making the child feel secure and worthy, or verbally assaulting the child by belittling, blaming, sarcasm, screaming and threats.

ORGANISED ABUSE

Organised abuse is sexual abuse or exploitation where there is more than a single abuser and the perpetrators concerned appear to act together to abuse the child or children, and/or where an adult uses an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for sexual abuse or exploitation.

BULLYING

Bullying, between children, is increasingly recognised as harmful to children and adolescents. It could involve physical intimidation, verbal intimidation or emotional intimidation. It may include racist and sexist remarks or isolating or excluding someone. It always involves a less powerful person experiencing deliberate hostility.



SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Spiritual abuse occurs when a spiritual leader or someone in a position of spiritual power or authority (whether organisation, church or family) misuses their power or authority, and the trust placed in them, with the intention of controlling, coercing, manipulating or dominating a child.

3. POTENTIAL INDICATORS OF ABUSE/NEGLECT

All persons working within the Connect Network must be alert to the following potential indicators of abuse/neglect as not all children will report abuse/neglect:

- Injuries/bruises not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries/illness that have not received appropriate medical care
- Repeated complaints of pains not accounted for by a medical diagnosis
- Undernourishment
- Failure to grow or develop as expected
- Constant hunger
- Stealing of food or other items
- Poor personal hygiene
- Sudden changes in behaviour/personality
- Decline in academic functioning or decline in normal achievement
- Excessive and/or persistent tiredness/sleepiness
- Poor mental and emotional health such as depression/fearfulness/anxiety
- Attention-seeking behaviour or withdrawal
- Inappropriate relationships with peers/adults
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge
- Sexualised play
- Substance abuse
- Aggression

4. BEHAVIOUR PROTOCOLS

Our behaviour protocols apply to staff, volunteers, board members, students, consultants, visitors, donors, sponsors, parents and guests, all of whom are expected to treat children with respect and dignity.

ALL people acting on behalf of **Connect Network** Should:

- Interact with children positively with consideration of their developmental stage and context with the aim of helping them to reach their full potential
- Use opportunities to teach children their rights and responsibilities, and empower them to best use the knowledge
- Encourage an environment that is favourable and safe for children to share their concerns
- Encourage child participation in decision making and program development
- Be aware of and manage situations that present a risk to children
- Plan and organise work procedures and environments to minimise the risks to children
- Encourage an attitude of openness amongst staff and volunteers so that best practice is aspired to, and potential abusive behaviour can be averted and used as a learning opportunity
- Always be visible to other adults when interacting with children
- Report immediately any suspicion that a child could be at risk of harm or abuse
- Be sensitive to a child's developmental age, culture, background and context

Should never:

- Discriminate against, show differential treatment to, or favour particular children in preference to others
- Be alone with a child either in the project or outside it
- Act in ways that are abusive or place children at risk of abuse
- Act in a questionable way
- Dress inappropriately
- Physically assault, hit or abuse children
- Engage in rough or physical contact with a child, unless it is permitted within the

- rules of the game or activity
- Develop sexual relationships with children, or use sexual innuendo to exploit or abuse them
 - Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
 - Invite children to stay with you at home, or provide them with your personal contact information such as your phone number
 - Discuss personal issues about a child or their family with other people apart from the designated child protection officer of **Connect Network**, the participating affiliate organisation and designated authorities
 - Keep reports or suspicions of abuse a secret
 - Offer to transport children in your personal vehicle without another adult present and without the relevant authorisation
 - Transport more than the legal number of passengers in a vehicle
 - Fail to report concerns or the suspicion of abuse/neglect
 - Fail to act in the best interest of a child

When disciplining:

Connect Network supports the use of praise and reward for good behaviour as a method of discipline and the use of verbal discipline and withdrawing of privileges where that does not prove effective.

We do not support the use of physical discipline of any form from Connect staff or volunteers. We believe discipline should only take place in a stable, loving relationship where the child is not exposed to any form of manipulation or abuse.

Each affiliate organisation should have their own protocol for disciplining the children in their care. We encourage our affiliates to use methods which facilitate learning and growth in children, and to avoid any form of physical punishment.

When **Connect Network** staff, volunteers or visitors are on a site visit or project, and the situation arises in which discipline is needed and appropriate, it is recommended that the behavioural issue be referred to a representative of the affiliate organisation to address

discipline issues.

These behaviour protocols are not exhaustive or exclusive; the principle is that all people should avoid actions or behaviours that constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

If the protocol and/or the regulations of **Connect Network** are broken the person involved will be disciplined and may lose their job or their voluntary work, in accordance with the **Connect Network** Disciplinary Code. All applicants for employment and voluntary work will be made fully aware of these requirements before they accept any paid or voluntary position.

Any individual knowing or suspecting that these protocols or their regulations are being broken and children are being abused is obliged to report that behaviour to the child protection officer (CPO) or executive director of **Connect Network**.

Any disclosure of abuse must be reported within 24 hours to the child protection officer of the involved affiliate organisation, or the child protection officer of Connect Network or the executive director of Connect Network should the child protection officer not be available.

If the incident involves an affiliate organisation then the relevant affiliate organisation, or where necessary the police and/or designated Child Protection Organisation should be contacted. Should the affiliate organisation child protection officer not respond within 48 hours, the matter will be followed up by the Connect Network child protection officer, and reported if necessary by the officer or involved staff member to a Child Protection Organisation or the police.

All disclosures and allegations are to be recorded using the 'Incident Form' (Appendix 1) and be kept as a confidential record with the child protection officer. Those who report an allegation are required to keep the information confidential and only deal with the child protection officer or delegated investigators and not the alleged perpetrator.

Complete confidentiality, or a secret, should never be promised to the reporter or victim,

regardless of who they are. This could jeopardise the safety of the child. The best interest of the child must be considered in all situations.

Should a child, who is not the victim of the incident, report an allegation, every care should be taken to protect the identity and well-being of the child reporting the incident.

5. REPORTING OF CONCERNS AND ALLEGATIONS

It is the responsibility of all **Connect Network** staff to report all concerns of abuse or potential child abuse to the relevant person or authority.

Workers are obliged to report if abuse/inappropriate behaviour is observed or suspected, when an allegation of abuse is made or when a child discloses abuse.

An appointed Child Protection Officer (CPO) in **Connect Network** will be the delegated person who is responsible for dealing with allegations of child abuse. The duties of the CPO will be included in the job description of the appointed staff member.

In all matters where the child protection officer is unavailable or unable to fulfil their duties, the executive director will take responsibility for dealing with child protection matters.

The executive director is designated to deal with the media in the event of an allegation against a person within the **Connect Network**.

If the child protection officer is implicated, then the matter should be reported directly to the executive director. **Connect Network** is committed to being a place where people and children can forward genuine concerns or suspicions without fear of reprisal.

Staff will not be disciplined or dismissed for reporting suspicious behaviour even if those suspicions are not found to be justified so long as those reports are truthful and the reporting is done in good faith and follows due process, protecting the identity of the child and the suspected offender. Staff bringing abusive behaviour to the attention of the relevant

people will be regarded as acting in a responsible and positive way.

Connect Network is committed to treating the victim and the alleged perpetrator with dignity and respect while an investigation is taking place. However, it is recognised that adults generally have a lot more power than children and may bribe or frighten them to drop any allegations if they have unsupervised access to them following an allegation. For this reason staff should not contact the alleged perpetrator without the input of the child protection officer. All investigations will be confidential and information gathered will be on a 'need to know' basis. Children will be supported and protected from the alleged abuser until a full investigation has taken place.

The safety of the child is the paramount consideration at all times.

If a child discloses abuse to a board director, staff member or volunteer of the **Connect Network**, the person must respond in the following way:

- React calmly
- Show acceptance of what the child says
- Reassure the child that they have the right to tell
- Tell the child you need to inform the relevant persons and explain the next steps of the process in child-friendly terms
- Take all allegations of abuse/neglect seriously
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened, bribed or manipulated not to tell anyone
- Do not judge or blame the child or make the child feel guilty
- Listen, even when it is hard to believe
- Ensure that the child is safe
- If the child needs medical attention, ensure that the medical staff know it is a child protection issue
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible
- Complete the Incident Form (Appendix 1)
- Report the matter to the CPO of **Connect Network** within 24 hours

The person must NOT do the following:

- Make empty promises such as keeping the information a secret
- Judge/blame the child or make the child feel guilty
- Give the impression that he/she does not believe the story
- Try to determine the guilt of the person accused – that is the role of the justice system
- Push for information or ask leading questions
- Interrupt the child while they share the story
- Fail to report or cover up for high profile people
- Send the child back into unsafe circumstances

6. PROCEDURES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

Non-compliance with this child protection policy poses a serious liability to the **Connect Network** as an organisation and to the interests of children who should be protected by the Network. Therefore child protection implementation should form part of the annual risk assessment process of the **Connect Network** board and non-compliance viewed in a very serious light. Therefore the continuous development of child protection measures in line with best practice and the implementation of non-compliance procedures in the event of a breach must be ensured.

Staff members who do not comply with the procedures outlined in this policy will face consequences such as a disciplinary hearing in line with the Connect Network's Disciplinary Code.

Should a board director fail to act in compliance with this child protection policy, the matter will be referred to the board and the board will make a decision with regards to how this matter will be handled. In the event where the matter cannot be resolved in the best interest of children and of the organisation, the board director may be asked to resign voluntarily or be asked to step down as a board director.

Visitors/volunteers/students/interns who fail to comply with the procedures of this child protection policy or whose interaction with children raises questions, will not be allowed to



continue their involvement with child-based projects and will also not be allowed to have continued access to children if that is in the best interest of the children concerned.

Should a staff member, board director, visitor, volunteer, student or intern of the **Connect Network** be accused of inappropriate interaction with children or concerns be expressed with regards to their care of children, as part of Connect Network activities or independently, the matter will be investigated by the child protection officer (CPO) of the **Connect Network**. The following procedures must be kept in mind when responding to concerns or complaints:

- The complaint or concern must be obtained in writing as far as possible through completion of Appendix 1: Incident form.
- The CPO must keep detailed records of all conversations, documentation, as well as meeting minutes to document the investigative process as well as the outcomes.
- The CPO should ensure that all processes are followed up until clear outcomes are reached by continuing to liaise with the relevant role-players.
- This information should be stored safely and confidentially, but be available to relevant persons such as the police.
- If a person poses a risk to children, the person may not be allowed to work with children in the organisation and the allegation will be reported to the police/statutory social services/DSD if applicable.
- If any allegations or concerns of child abuse relate to a worker of **Connect Network** then the board will determine the appropriate course of action in terms of the worker continuing with their usual work, pending any investigation into the allegations or concerns. It is strongly recommended that such a person be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation as to ensure that the person does not interfere with witnesses.
- If the person is found guilty of misconduct following the child protection procedures and protocol, they will be disciplined according to the **Connect Network** Disciplinary Code. If a person is found guilty of abuse, they will be dismissed immediately, as set out in the **Connect Network** Disciplinary Code. The person will also be reported to the National Child Protection Register and the National Register for Sex Offenders if applicable.



7. RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND APPOINTMENT

Connect Network is committed to carefully screening anyone who wants to interact with children on behalf of the Network. People will only be recruited or allowed access to children after specific information has been gathered and judged upon. During induction, new workers should be familiarised with the child protection policy and asked to sign in acceptance form stating they understand the content of the policy and agree to abide by it.

On applying to work directly with **Connect Network** all new applicants, including paid staff, board directors and unpaid volunteers should provide at least 2 contactable references. It is the responsibility of the child protection officer and the executive director to ensure that the references are contacted and that the necessary child protection information is gathered.

All staff, board directors and volunteers must declare any history, criminal or civil, of child abuse by completing and signing the Personal Commitment Child Protection Form (Appendix 2) as part of their application. Should a person declare an offense unrelated to children, discretion will lie with the executive director and CPO to determine whether the disclosure prohibits the applicant from further involvement with **Connect Network'** activities. It is strongly advised that applicants with a criminal record unrelated to children not be considered for appointment as this may pose a liability for the organisation. In the event of a person having a negative history, whether criminal or civil involving children, such a person must not be allowed to be involved in any child-focused initiative.

All staff, board directors and long-term volunteers (those who will be volunteering for more than three months), especially those who will regularly interact with children will have to receive clearance in terms of the National Child Protection Register Part B and the National Register for Sex Offenders.

The staff member responsible for the human resource functions within the **Connect Network NPC** will be responsible to complete Form 29 on behalf of all staff members, board directors and long-term volunteers to obtain clearance in terms of the National Child Protection Register Part B from the Department of Social Development (DSD).



Each staff member, board director and long-term volunteer will be responsible to obtain individual police clearance in terms of the National Register for Sex Offenders at their local police station. Overseas long-term volunteers must also obtain police clearance from their country of origin and if they are in South Africa for more than two years, local police clearance certificates.

These clearances must be safely filed by the CPO and be must updated at least every third year.

Clearance certificates must be the original, or a certified copy, from the police and the Directorate General (DSD). No clearance forms from agencies or Criminal Record Check companies will be accepted. Permission to interact with children or continuation within the **Connect Network** in any capacity is dependent upon judging these declarations. Any false declarations will result in the implementation of non-compliance procedures.

As part of the interview process, irrespective of the nature of the job applied for the issue of child protection will be raised. During the interview process, the interviewer must check for the following and ensure that these documents are safely filed together with the application forms:

- Background checks through positive reference feedback with specific questions on the applicant's history (if any) in relation to child protection issues and the person's suitability in working with children. Written notes of these reference checks must be kept.
- No criminal record (police clearance or at least an application for police clearance until police clearance is received)
- Signed Appendix 2: Personal commitment child protection form
- Verification of reasons for gaps in employment
- History with regards to working with children and relationship with own children (if a parent)

Connect Network understands that it is a criminal offence to employ or allow someone to have access to children if that person is declared unsuitable to work with children. Therefore if a person is found to be unsuitable to work with children, such a



person would immediately be dismissed from working with children and having further access to children under the umbrella of the **Connect Network**.

8. VISITORS AND SITE-VISITS

Connect Network staff members, board directors and volunteers who visit affiliate organisations' sites where there are children present must at all times act according to **Connect Network's** child protection policy.

When visitors or volunteers go to a site with children it is the responsibility of the present **Connect Network** staff member to ensure that the visitor is a known reference and that they sign the 'Visitor Child Protection Form' (Appendix 3).

When a staff member visits a site with a visitor, volunteer or non-affiliate of **Connect Network**, the staff member must take responsibility to ensure the following:

- Visitors/volunteers must be briefed on the **Connect Network** child protection policy.
- Visitors/volunteers are not left unsupervised or alone with children without another adult being in sight.
- Visitors/volunteers do not initiate inappropriate physical contact with children.
- The photographs taken always respect the dignity of the child based on the guidelines of this policy.
- Volunteers work under the supervision of a full time staff member of the **Connect Network** and are accountable to report to that staff member.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

Connect Network is committed to its workers as well as to the children. Therefore, it is essential that the names and details of all people involved in a possible child abuse case only be disclosed to the relevant persons in so far it is possible unless disclosure to others is in the best interest of the child. Complete confidentiality should never be promised as this could compromise the safety of the child.



Any allegations or suspicions of abuse must be reported, but only to the designated child protection officer of the affiliate organisation or of **Connect Network**, or the director in the situation where the child protection officer is not available.

The child protection officer (CPO) will keep record of the information about any allegations and will continue to treat the accused with dignity throughout. The child protection officer will carefully consider the situation before any information is reported and must handle the information with discretion and wisdom.

Connect Network commits however never to cover up for high profile people allegedly accused of questionable behaviour, but use the best interest of the child in line with legislation and best practice as the guiding principle in responding to allegations/concerns.

10. PHOTOGRAPHY AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Connect Network aims to maintain the respect and dignity of children in our portrayal of them, while accurately raising public awareness of the reality of children at risk. All photographs and visual imagery will accurately portray and not sensationalise the situation of children.

No **Connect Network** staff member, volunteer, board director or visitor is allowed to create, download or use any visual image that:

- Does not respect the dignity and self-worth of the child
- Is exploitative or manipulative as far as the subject is concerned (*e.g.* asking the child to cry for the photo)
- Misleads the viewer as to the actual situation of the subject of the image (*e.g.* labelling children as HIV orphans)
- Distorts reality or does not accurately reflect reality
- Discloses personal information about the child or family

When taking photographs or recording videos staff members and visitors should ask permission of the child and guardian, and the legal guardian must sign an Electronic Media Consent Form (Appendix 4). Visitors taking photographs or videos on site visits need to



comply by signing the Electronic Media Release Form (Appendix 5).). Should a staff member want to take an impromptu photo on a site visit they should use the On Site Consent Form (Appendix 6).

Photographs of children may not be used on any documentation or electronic media without the consent of the legal guardian and **Connect Network**. This includes Facebook and other social media sites.

Photographs of children in swimming costumes may only be used for documentation purposes by **Connect Network** and may not be put online without the informed consent of the child, guardian, participating organisation and the **Connect Network** child protection officer.

Photographs may not be taken of children who are in protection of the court. When receiving permission to take photographs it should clearly be communicated that children who are in a place of safety should not participate.

All **Connect Network** staff members, volunteers, visitors and board directors should also take care to never expose a child to unhealthy media content portraying sexual scenes, inappropriate language or violence and be strongly discouraged to engage with such content themselves. Instead children should be educated on the healthy use of media and technology as well as the dangers of unsafe use such as chatting with unknown persons online.

11. DATA, RECORD AND DOCUMENT PROTECTION

Connect Network will inform our partner organisations or networks of our child protection policy and procedures, outlining that these documents are copyrighted and not to be passed on without prior written consent. We will encourage any organisation we help to also introduce a good child protection policy.

Connect Network does not keep any unnecessary records of children's names or identifying details. All registers, progress reports and any details of children are kept by affiliate

organisations. Only statistics will be provided to **Connect Network**.

Connect Network will keep a record of a child's particulars in the event that abuse is directly reported to or associated with **Connect Network**. In this instance, the child protection officer will keep all records confidential, and no one will be allowed access to these records except for purposes of reporting or following up on an incident.

Furthermore, **Connect Network** will keep photograph- and camp consent forms for Connect related projects. These forms include the names of the children and their legal guardian. The names of the child and family will in no way be associated to the photographs that are used. They will be stored in the child protection officer's files and should not be destroyed.

12. TRAINING, ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

Connect Network is committed to working with other projects, community members, government and police to eradicate the abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. We commit ourselves to learn with others, and speak up for children to receive justice and protection in our community. We commit to making people aware of the risks and abuse experienced by children and what they can do to protect them. We commit to work together with others to educate and empower children to identify and to speak up about abuse as well as to report abuse.

Connect Network is committed to educating our staff, board, volunteers and affiliates about the importance of child protection so that children are protected from abuse by staff and others and so that preventive measures can be put in place to protect **Connect Network** and the children in our care.

Connect Network will continue to provide opportunities for our staff and network affiliates to learn about and discuss child abuse, between themselves and with other organisations in the wider network of global children's work.

We will do this by:

- Advocating and training on Child Protection, Child Wellbeing and Child participation



(Such as the Quality Improvement System – Child Protection, Child Wellbeing and Project Planning and Design)

- Facilitating child protection focus groups/working groups
- Mobilising churches and community-based organisations to provide safe environments for children
- Making child protection resources available such as the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child; contact details of community resources etc.
- Collaborating to create safe communities or child care forums through partnerships
- Celebrating national and international child protection days and months
- Visibly displaying child protection information and information on children's rights at **Connect** offices
- Informing our affiliates about and reporting on child protection initiatives such as educating children on safety awareness through the Infopage
- Do refresher courses with **Connect** staff at least every two years to include updates on child protection legislation and latest developments in line with best practice including identifying and reporting abuse
- Visibly displaying the details of the **Connect** CPO at **Connect** child-focused projects and at the **Connect** office
- Informing our partners about the content of this child protection policy to ensure that they are in adherence to it

13. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTATION

The following policies and documents are related to the **Connect Network** child protection policy and procedures:

- Board manual
- Staff handbook
- Personnel policy
- Volunteer policy
- Partnership policy (if developed)
- Appendix 1: Incident form
- Appendix 2: Personal commitment child protection form
- Appendix 3: Visitor child protection form
- Appendix 4: Electronic media consent form
- Appendix 5: Electronic media release form
- Appendix 6: On-site consent form

APPENDIX 1: INCIDENT FORM

DETAILS OF PERSON REPORTING INCIDENT	
Your name:	
Your address:	
Your age:	
Your email address or contact details:	
Your role in, or relationship with Connect Network :	
Your relationship with the child or young person:	
CHILD'S DETAILS	
Child's name:	
Child's address:	
Child's date of birth:	
Who does the child live with? Please give name(s) and nature of relationship with the child:	
Is the child male or female?	
DETAILS OF THE CONCERN/ABUSE	
Nature of concern(s) / allegation(s):	
Details of how you came to have a concern / allegation:	



Day, date, time and location of any incident(s)	
Observations made by you (NB: Please distinguish what is fact, opinion or hearsay):	
What did the child say?	
What did you say to the child?	
Details of any other children involved:	
Details of any other witnesses of the event:	
External agencies contacted – date, time, name of person dealt with and advice received:	
Action taken by you:	
What is the current situation and safety of the child?	
Your signature:	
Date this form was completed:	
Date form filed with the child protection officer:	
Date action take/followed up according to the policy:	(for office use only)



APPENDIX 2: PERSONAL COMMITMENT CHILD PROTECTION FORM

TO BE COMPLETED BY EACH PERSON WANTING TO INTERACT WITH OR FOR CHILDREN WITH OR FOR **Connect Network**.

I [name] have read and understood **Connect Network's** Child Protection Policy and I promise to abide by it and the procedures mentioned in the policy.

I hereby declare that I have never been accused of, or found guilty of, any form of child abuse or paedophilia in the past or present, and to my knowledge my name does not appear in the National Child Protection Register, Part B or the National Register for Sex Offenders. I have also no prior history, whether civil or criminal of acting detrimentally to children.

I agree to apply for clearance in the National Child Protection Register and National Register for Sex Offenders when requested by **Connect Network**.

I commit myself to protect all children, both boys and girls, from physical, sexual and emotional abuse. I commit myself to report discretely, so as not to present further opportunity for abuse, any suspicious activity or inappropriate behaviour noted towards children as according to the procedures set out in this policy.

I further commit to maintaining confidentiality, as set out in the policy, in all child protection issues. I will not divulge any information about a child or suspected perpetrator to anyone unless it is according to **Connect Network's** reporting procedures.

I am aware that if found guilty of any form of child abuse or disclosure of confidential information, as described in this policy, I will be disciplined according to the **Connect Network** Disciplinary Code and the procedures set out in the Child Protection policy, furthermore I understand that legal action either in South Africa or abroad may be taken against me.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Signature: _____



APPENDIX 3: VISITOR CHILD PROTECTION FORM

To be read and signed by all visitors going to a site:

General information:

- A child refers to every young person under the age of 18 years old
- Connect Network takes responsibility for promoting the protection of the children who are on the site visit. If under any circumstance the Connect staff present do not approve of your behaviour they hold the right to address this and to take the appropriate action.

Visitors should:

- Avoid inappropriate dress and be culturally sensitive to the environment in which the project is based
- Avoid questionable behaviour, which could be offensive or misinterpreted
- Be visible to other adults at all times
- Respect each child's boundaries, and their right to privacy and confidentiality
- Be culturally sensitive to the attitude of physical contact. Touch should only be initiated by the child and should be age appropriate.

It is not appropriate to:

- Spend time alone with children
- Invite children to meet with you, or to come to your house
- Give children your email address, cell phone number or any contact details
- Use discriminative or suggestive language or behaviour
- Offer to transport children in your personal vehicle, unless under special circumstances with the permission of the hosting organisation
- Transport more than the legal number of passengers in a vehicle

With regards to taking photographs, the following must be considered:

- No photographs may be taken without the permission of the child, consent of the parent/guardian, consent of **Connect Network** staff member and participating organisation.
- No visitor is allowed to **create or use** any visual image that:
 - a) Does not respect the dignity and self-worth of the child
 - b) Is exploitative or manipulative as far as the subject is concerned (*e.g.* asking the child to cry for the photograph)
 - c) Misleads the viewer as to the actual situation of the subject of the image (*e.g.* labelling children as HIV orphans)
 - d) Distorts reality or does not accurately reflect reality
- No photographs of children's profiles or in swimming costumes may be published or used in electronic media
- No photographs may disclose the personal information of the child or family involved



By signing this form I declare that I have read the code of conduct for visitors,
and agree to abide by it.

Signed

Location

Date

(Please keep a copy of the first page for your own reference, signature page for
office keeping)



APPENDIX 4: ELECTRONIC MEDIA CONSENT FORM

explanation of reason why photo is being taken

Please read the statements below and sign to show you agree with them.

I declare that I am the parent or guardian of the said child and I hereby:

- Grant permission for the child to voluntarily participate in the photo shoot with **Connect Network** and _____ (participating organisation/donor).
- Grant **Connect Network** and _____ (participating organisation/donor) the right to use the photographs resulting from the photo shoot, and any reproductions or adaptations of the photographs for all general purposes in relation to the event on the * (date). This may include any publicity materials, website content, brochure, or articles.
- Acknowledge that the child in my care is not under the protection of the court, or in a place of safety (please note that children in a place of safety may not have photographs of them taken or published).

Name of Child (please print name and surname)

.....

Name of parent or guardian (please print name and surname)

.....

Address

.....

.....

Signature..... Date.....

Please note that **Connect Network** and * (participating organisation/donor) will not disclose any of the photographed person's personal details, and that the person will be portrayed in a sensitive and positive manner.

APPENDIX 5: ELECTRONIC MEDIA RELEASE FORM

The following serves as an agreement between **Connect Network**,
(participating organisation/donor) and (name of photographer).
By signing the agreement (name of photographer and
participating organisation/donor) confirms that they understand the terms and conditions with
which they may create and make use of photographs.

Before photographs may be taken of any children, permission needs to be granted by the child, and
consent by their parent/guardian and the participating organisation.
..... (organisation) assumes responsibility to
arrange the necessary consent.

- No visual image may be created or used that:
 - a) Does not respect the dignity and self-worth of the child
 - b) Is exploitative or manipulative as far as the subject is concerned (e.g. asking the child to cry for the photo)
 - c) Misleads the viewer as to the actual situation of the subject of the image (e.g. labelling children as HIV orphans)
 - d) Distorts reality or does not accurately reflect reality
 - e) Discloses personal information about the child or family

- Any profile photographs of children should be taken with the permission of the child, and may not be used in any documentation or electronically without the informed consent of the parent or guardian.

- Photos may not be taken of children who are in protection of the court.

- The photographs that are used by (name of photographer and organisation) must:
 - a) Only be used for the purpose of
(the event; date of event)
 - b) Not be used for any other promotion, publication or campaign
 - c) Not be sold to any third party
 - d) Depict children in a truthful manner and no false information or negative labelling should be conveyed
 - e) Not disclose any personal or identifying details of the children and their family



- f) State that the photographs were taken and published with the permission of the child and consent from the parents/guardian, participating organisation and **Connect Network**

I hereby declare that I have read and agree to **Connect Network's** terms and conditions for taking and using photographs and electronic media:

Signature: _____ Full Name: _____

Date: _____ Organisation: _____

Connect Network representative: _____



APPENDIX 6: ON SITE CONSENT FORM

We would like to take your photo and use it within the publications of Connect Network, for example on newsletters, the website, advertising material and such.

Please read below and sign to show you agree with them.

I declare that I am the parent or guardian of the said child and I:

- Give permission for the child's photo to be taken by **Connect Network**
- Give **Connect Network** the right to use the photograph and any reproductions or adaptations of the photographs for all general purposes. This may include any publicity materials, website content, brochure, or articles.
- Acknowledge that the child in my care is not under the protection of the court, or in a place of safety (please note that children in a place of safety may not have photographs of them taken or published).

Name of child (please print name and surname)

.....

Name of parent or guardian (please print name and surname)

.....

Address

.....

.....

Signature..... Date.....

Please note that Connect Network will not disclose any personal details, and that the person will be portrayed in a sensitive and positive manner.



This updated child protection policy and procedures was approved by the Connect Network board of directors on the 6 February of 2016 at Somerset West.



Signature of chairperson

6 February 2016

Date