

## Camara's Child Protection Policy

Camara's Child Protection Policy is applicable to all Camara Staff and Volunteers. Such Staff and Volunteers will hereby be referred to as 'Camara Personnel' throughout this document.

### *Introduction*

Camara's Child Protection Policy was established to demonstrate the strong commitment of Camara Personnel to child safety and to ensure and maintain a child safe and friendly environment at all times.

Camara is aware that the goods and services provided through our development programmes can create a power differential between Camara personnel and the programme participants. We acknowledge that there is potential for this power imbalance to be exploited by Camara personnel to acquire bribes, payments, gifts, and

/ or sexual favours. Camara's Child Protection Policy has been developed to ensure the maximum protection of young programme participants from exploitation and to clarify the responsibilities of Camara Personnel and the standards of behaviour expected of them.

Abuse of power has, in the past, led to many forms of exploitation, both within the development sphere in developing countries, and in social institutions in Europe and America. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has added to the vulnerability of children who are increasingly targeted for unprotected sex because of the greater likelihood that they are uninfected, or in some cases, because the belief may persist that having sex with a virgin is a way of curing AIDS. Camara condemns any such exploitation and is committed to the protection of programme participants.



Camara's Code of Conduct on Child Protection has been developed to reflect this policy.

Acceptance of this policy and Camara's Code of Conduct on Child Protection is a prerequisite for anyone who wishes to work / volunteer with the organisation.

Such acceptance should also be a requirement of any partnership agreement that Camara enters into with other organizations.

### **The Rights of the Child**

A child is defined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) as a person under the age of 18 years.

The UNCRC applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities: whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

The UNCRC reflects a new vision of the child. Children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and are the subject of their own rights. The Convention offers a vision of the child as an individual *and* as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development. By recognizing children's rights in this way, the Convention firmly sets the focus on the whole child.



The Convention and its acceptance by so many countries has heightened recognition of the fundamental human dignity of all children and the urgency of ensuring their well-being and development. The Convention makes clear the idea that a basic quality of life should be the right of all children, rather than a privilege enjoyed by a few.

As outlined in the Convention:

- **The best interests of children** must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.
- All children have the right to **participation**. Children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life. Participation rights include the right to express opinions and be heard, the right to information and freedom of association.
- All children have the right to **life, survival and development**. Children have the right to the resources, skills and contributions necessary for the survival and full development of the child. This includes the right to adequate food, shelter, clean water, formal education, primary health care, leisure and recreation, cultural activities and information about their rights. These rights require not only the existence of the means to fulfil the rights but also access to them. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.
- All children have the right to **protection**. All children have the right to protection from all forms of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and cruelty, including the right to



special protection in times of war and protection from abuse in the criminal justice system.

### **Camara's Commitment to Child Safety**

It is Camara policy to take all steps that are reasonably possible to protect children coming into contact with the organisation or otherwise from harassment and abuse perpetrated by Camara Personnel. All children who come into contact with Camara have a right to feel safe and to be safe. Camara is committed to the safety and well being of all children and young people accessing our services and the welfare of the children in contact with the organisation remains our number one priority.

### **Incidents of Child Abuse and Neglect:**

The following is a list, but not exhaustive, of potential acts of child abuse & neglect.

- **Physical abuse** – physical abuse of children is defined as excessive intentional physical injury to a child or excessive corporal punishment of a child. Torture, beatings, and assault of children are obvious forms of physical abuse.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional abuse constitutes an attack on a child or young person's self-esteem ie: through bullying, harassment, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or by isolating the child.
- **Sexual abuse** – sexual abuse constitutes any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person.
- **Neglect** – child neglect in any form, when it concerns a child's welfare, is generally considered to be criminal behaviour. Neglecting a child results in the young person being harmed by the failure to provide the basic physical or emotional necessities.



## **Camara's Code of Conduct on Child Protection**

Camara personnel have a responsibility to the organisation to strive for and maintain the highest standards in the day to day conduct of their work in accordance with Camara's core values and mission. As such, the following Code of Conduct on Child Protection should be adhered to at all times.

Camara's Code of Conduct on Child Protection is considered a key tool for the prevention of harassment, exploitation and inappropriate behaviour by Camara personnel. The Code of Conduct describes acceptable standards of behaviour and promotes good practice.

It is the responsibility of all Camara Personnel to adhere to the Code of Conduct.

## **Sexual Relationships with Children**

Sexual activity between a Camara staff or volunteer and a child (person under the age of 18) is strictly forbidden. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is no defence.

Any efforts to seduce a minor into a sexual relationship, whether the act is accomplished or not, will likewise be considered a form of child sexual abuse and will result in severe legal consequences. Inappropriate intimacy with children will also be regarded as child sexual abuse.

## **Harassment, Exploitation, Trafficking and Abuse**



Camara recognises that all Camara Personnel have a right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Therefore, any proven instance of harassment, exploitation, trafficking or abuse will be treated as gross misconduct and as such, will result in appropriate disciplinary action being taken, up to and including dismissal.

**Camara personnel must:**

- Establish and maintain a child safe environment in the course of their work (ie: when conducting activities related to the aim and purpose of Camara).
- Treat children and young people with respect, listen to and value their ideas and opinions and do everything in their power to protect their well being.
- Respect the privacy of children and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.
- Operate within the rules of Camara policy guidelines and procedures and comply with specific guidelines on physical contact with children.
- Be professional in their actions through their use of language, presentation, manner and punctuality.
- Aim to resolve conflicts fairly and promptly by reporting any breaches of Camara's standards of behaviour through the established reporting mechanism.
- Maintain strict impartiality.
- Camara personnel must notify the Country CEO/Africa Operations Manager/ECSC



Manager as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been or is being abused, has been trafficked or neglected.

**Camara Personnel must not:**

- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or offensive language with children.
  - Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.
- Develop ‘special’ relationships with specific children for their own needs.
- Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.

Camara personnel should conduct themselves at all times in a manner that avoids suspicion of such behaviour.

**Any breach of Camara’s Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.**



## Duty to Report

It is the duty of all Camara Personnel who become aware of any breaches to this Code to report it immediately to Country CEO/Africa Operations Manager/ ECSC Manager, either through the established reporting mechanism or, if not appropriate, to another senior member of staff.

It is important that any concerns or suspicions, whether major or minor, about a suspected incident of exploitation, harassment or bullying are reported immediately. All incidents must be discussed with a line manager or other senior member of staff. A fuller picture is likely to emerge which might reduce the level of concern or, on the other hand, may lead to the realisation that further action is appropriate.

Camara Personnel must ensure that all information about breaches of this Code is handled with the utmost discretion.

All such concerns must be recorded and the record held in a secure location.

An incident report form must be completed.



## **Incident Report Form**

**Who?** Camara Personnel and others involved

**When?** Date and time of incident

**Where?** Incident location (attach map / sketch / diagram if necessary)

**What has happened?** Description of incident

**What have you done about it?**

**What help do you need?**

**Add any other important information here**

Name:

Signature:

Position:

Date:



All incidents of child abuse must be reported to the local police ASAP.

At Camara we do not tolerate incidents of child abuse or neglect. Such incidents are considered gross misconduct and will lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and possible criminal prosecution.

**I have read and understood Camara's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct on Child Protection. I hereby agree to conduct myself in accordance with the provisions of these two documents.**



## *List of References*

Camara's original Child Protection Policy Document (draft) – *The Child Safe / Child Protection Policy for Camara.*

Concern Worldwide (2004) *Programme Participant Protection Policy.*

The Department of Health and Children website.

UNICEF *Convention on the Rights of the Child.* Available at [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

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