

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN THE DIOCESE OF BANJUL

Introduction:

Children are a gift from God to families, church and society at large. They are human, created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28) and as such they deserve to be treated with care and dignity. How children are nurtured now will have some impact on them as future adults.

The interest in child protection is based on the increasing instances of their abuse and the desire to protect and form our future generations in the best way possible. Childs' rights are promoted world wide; The Gambia has enacted a law (Child Act 2005) to safeguard the rights of the child which also includes their responsibilities. Similarly the Diocese of Banjul wishes to contribute its quota in ensuring child welfare through this policy within Parishes, Schools and Institutions belonging to the Diocese.

1. Goals of the Policy:

- To ensure that children within the Institutions, Associations, Parishes and development projects supported by the Banjul Diocese are treated with dignity, respect and without any discrimination and their rights are promoted, fulfilled and protected including their right to protection from violence, abuse, exploitations and neglect.
- To provide children with opportunities to develop to their full potentials in all Diocesan Institutions, Associations, Parishes and supported projects.
- To ensure that due attention is given to child welfare all throughout the Diocese.

2. Definitions:

- A child is any person aged from birth to 18 years (United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child, 1989 and under The Children Act 2005 Laws of The Gambia.
- Staff are people who are contracted wage earners, Revrend Sisters, Priests, Teachers, Volunteers, Catechists, working full time or parttime in any Discezsan activity.
- A Volunteer is any person working in a Disceasan program with or without remuneration, including elected lay members.
- Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve conveying that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet the basic physical and or psychological needs of a child or vulnerable adult's. It may involve a parent or guardian failing to protect, provide adequate food, shelter, warmth, clothing and cleanliness. It may also include

leaving a child home alone, exposure in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury or the failure to ensure that appropriate medical care or treatment is received.

- Physical Abuse may involve the actual or attempted physical injury to a child or vulnerable adult including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise harming them. It may also be caused when a parent or care giver feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. Physical abuse may also be a deliberate act, omission or failure to protect.
- Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities whether or not they are aware of or consent to what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. This may include non-contact activities such as forcing children or vulnerable adults to look at or be involved in the production of pornographic material, to watch sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, including persons to whom they are not related to and by other young people. This includes people from all walks of life.
- Children and vulnerable adults may experience harassment or negative discrimination because of their race or ethnic origin, socio-economic status, culture, age, disability, gender, sexuality or religious beliefs.
- Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time. Bullying may have serious lasting effects on the victim. It is important to recognize that in some cases of abuse, it may not always be an adult abusing a young person or vulnerable adult. It can occur that the abuser may be a young person, which is a case of bullying.

3. Recruitment and Posting of Staff

- All staff to be recruited for all Catholic Institutions, Associations, Parishes and Diocesan supported projects dealing with children must be screened for child abuse – these institutions and associations include schools, health care institutions, youth groups, missionary childhood associations including altar servers, and all who work with the church.
- Applicants for employment with a history of a sexual offence and or child abuse shall not be considered for placement or hire.
- Should it come to light after the employment of any staff that such a staff had a history of child abuse, exploitation, and violence against children and such a staff had failed to disclose that at the time of his or her recruitment, the staff shall be dismissed

forthwith without the benefit of serving any notice period or entitlement to any compensation financial or otherwise.

- Applicants for employment shall supply the names of two references, and the hiring agents will make reasonable efforts to verify their suitability with specific questions asked in relation to the applicant's history of child abuse.
- Persons found to have abused children are barred from employment in all Diocesan Parishes, Institutions, Associations and supported projects.
- All staff to be recruited must sign a declaration form declaring any previous court convictions and or pending/previous investigations.
- All staff and volunteers must be briefed on the implementation of the Child Protection Policy within 2 weeks of their employment start date
- Catholic Institutions and Associations shall include some personnel with child protection expertise so as to monitor and evaluate the activities of the staff on regular basis. Parishes shall be encouraged to involve reliable personnel within them, like religious, parish chairperson, and reputable persons.

4. Code of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

DO:

- Be aware of dangers to children and vulnerable adults, including peer relationships.
- Be visible to others when working.
- Encourage discussion and open expression.
- Be a positive role model.
- Be caring, and responsible.
- Demonstrate kindness and empathy.
- Demonstrate fairness and equal treatment.
- Involve children and vulnerable adults as appropriate in conversations and making decisions which affect them.
- Ask permission of some responsible person in charge before taking a photograph (includes mobile phones, cameras/computers) of any child or vulnerable person.
- Inform and empower children and vulnerable adults by discussing their rights, and who to go to with complaints.
- End parish programs by 6:30PM to allow children get home before dark. If an activity goes later than 6:30PM, parents and guardians must be informed in advance.
- Parents and guidance must give written consent to allow their children to participate in activities that will take them away from home such as trips, excursions, retreats, parties, sports, picnics and similar activities.
- Record who attends the activity, and the time of beginning and ending.
- Play a positive role in protection and safety.

- Have kindergarten children escorted to and from school by people known to the teachers.
- Work with a parish member if you are an expatriate Volunteer.
- In respect to local customs, staff and volunteers will dress in a way which at least covers shoulders to knees.
- A teacher or care giver should be vigilant and report any incidence of abuse or suspected abuse.

DO NOT:

- Spend time alone with children, away and out of sight from others.
- Take children to your home if you will be alone with them.
- Hit or otherwise abuse.
- Develop sexual relationships with children or vulnerable individuals in your care.
- Use language, make suggestions, and or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive, sexual, aggressive, or illegal.
- Shame, degrade, humiliate, or belittle.
- Discriminate, exclude, or stigmatize.
- Expose children or vulnerable adults to pornography.
- Expose children to hazardous work.
- Violate confidentiality agreements or privacy.
- Touch or fondle children inappropriately

5. Communication:

- Notices will be displayed in public view in institutions, parishes and projects supported by the Diocese with contact details of the Designated Child Protection Officers indicated
- The Child Protection Policy will be available within the Child Welfare Office
- Children will be made aware of their rights through sensitization within institutions, associations, parishes and projects supported by the Diocese.
- Parents, Guardians, teachers and all those indicated will be sensitized on the child protection policy.

6. Code of Conduct for Staff:

- The laws of the state are binding on all staff of Catholic Institutions, Parishes, Associations and Diocesan supported projects
- A code of conduct for staff dealing with child protection shall be established for all Catholic institutions, Parishes, associations and Diocesan supported projects
- Staffs, all adults within Catholic Institutions, Parishes, Associations and Diocesan supported projects shall comport themselves with dignity and integrity expected of a child's parents.

- Staff and adults within the Catholic Institutions, Parishes and Diocesan supported projects shall see the welfare and protection of the children under their care as their responsibility before God

7. Preventing Child Abuse:

- The Diocese shall set up an office (Child Welfare Office) in the Catholic Secretariat to educate personnel within the catholic institutions and Parishes about their responsibilities towards the welfare and protection of children by August, 2013.
- The Child Welfare Office shall comprise of a Child Welfare Officer, a Deputy Child Welfare Officer and a committee of five people comprising of: a Priest, Reverend Sisters, Lawyer and two lay faithful.
- The Child Welfare Office shall monitor and evaluate the protection of the child and vulnerable persons in all Parishes, Catholic Institutions and Associations
- The Child Welfare Office shall deal with all cases of child abuse on behalf of the Diocese.
- The Child Welfare Office shall collaborate with institutions in The Gambia that deal with children's affairs such as but not restricted to Social Welfare and Child Protection Alliance.
- The Child Protection Designated Officer within the Child Welfare Office is:
 - Name:**
 - Role:**
 - Contact Number:**
 - Email:**
- The Deputy Child Protection Designated Officer within the Child Welfare Office is:
 - Name:**
 - Role:**
 - Contact Number:**
 - Email:**
- The Designated Officer must be trained in child safeguarding and in the implementation of this policy.
- The Child Welfare Office provides for regular monitoring, on-going assessment and review of these standards.

8. Dealing With Cases of Child Abuse:

- The staff member or volunteer must refer all cases and suspected cases of child abuse to the Child Protection Designated Officer at the Child Welfare Office.
- The Head of Institution/Association or Parish Priest shall not personally investigate the child abuse allegations but refer such cases to the Child Welfare Office. All cases of child abuse and suspected child abuse must not be concealed or attempted to be solved privately.

- The Designated Officer will interview the child and or person reporting the incident, ideally in the presence of another designated individual – if the complainant is agreeable to this.
- The complaint will be documented in writing either at the time or immediately after the interview with the complainant, using the Child Protection Reporting Form.
- The case file must be opened and updated accordingly and kept in a secure location for viewing by Designated Protection Officers and the Bishop.
- If medical attention is required, the Designated Officer will arrange this.
- The Child Welfare Officer may refer cases and allegations of child abuse to the police and or the appropriate authorities including the Social Welfare and the Child Protection Alliance
- The parents/guardians will be informed immediately of cases of child abuse
- The Designated Officer must inform the Parish Child Welfare Office.
- The Bishop must be informed of any allegation/report of abuse.
- Should the accusation involve any member of staff or volunteer they will be immediately suspended from duty until the case is investigated and resolved.
- Counselling services will be provided for the victim.
- Where appropriate, medical services will be sought and provided for the victim
- Offenders should be recommended for counselling
- The Designated Officer and others involved in the investigation of child abuse and abuse of vulnerable persons will treat the individuals and the report in a confidential, compassionate, respectful and responsible manner.
- The child's name should remain confidential at all times.
- Revictimization of the child shall be avoided at all times
- The protection officers shall receive training and guidance on child/ friendly procedures and communication with children.

9. Reporting procedures

- All complains should go to the Child Welfare officer who will review and investigate the complaint in a confidential manner and he / she shall make appropriate recommendations which will be shared with the committee who makes the final decisions, recommendations and protocols followed.
- The Child Welfare Officer in the event of serious allegations of physical and or sexual abuse of a child shall immediately refer the matter to the appropriate civil authorities like the Police, Doctors, Social Welfare and also inform the committee.
- The Child Welfare officer should be vigilant in making follow ups of reported cases.

- If following investigations regarding a case of abuse or suspected abuse and the allegations turn out to be false, the person making the allegation should apologize publicly which shall also be documented in writing.
- A person who has been falsely and maliciously accused of child abuse and abuse of vulnerable persons may take up the matter in a civil proceedings
- If it is ascertained that the child welfare officer failed or refused to deal with a case of abuse. A parent, staff and any other person may bring this to the attention of the committee for investigation.

10. Annual review:

Annual review of the work and findings of the Child Welfare Office shall be made by the Child Welfare Officer which will be confirmed and signed by the committee and filed in the office with a copy given to the Bishop.

11. Time frame

This policy shall take effect as from the 1st August 2013 and shall be reviewed not later than the 1st August 2015.

Signatures:

Name of Leadership: _____

Role of Leadership: _____

Signature of Leadership: _____

Date: _____

Stamp:

Name of Child Designated Officer: _____

Signature of Child Designated Officer: _____

Date: _____

Stamp:

CHILD PROTECTION Reporting Form

1. about the disclosure/concern

Date of disclosure/concern:

Time of disclosure/concern:

How was information received? *(Attach any written information to this form)*

Telephone Letter Email person

2. Details of person making disclosure/raising concern

Name

Address

Tel Mobile

Email

Relationship to child or alleged victim

3. Details of child or alleged victim

Name

Address

Tel Mobile

Ethnic origin

Language *(is interpreter/signer needed?)*

Religion

Disability

Special needs

Parish / Order *(if applicable)*

4. Parent / Guardian details *(where appropriate)*

Name

Address

Tel Mobile

Are they aware of the allegation, suspicion or complaint? Yes

5. Details of alleged perpetrator

Name

Address

Tel Mobile

Relationship to child/ victim *(parent/Priest/ teacher, etc.)*

Position

Address at time of incident(s)

Current contact with children, if known *(board of governors of school, runs youth activities etc.)*

Any additional information

6. Details of concern, allegation or complaint *(Include dates/times and location the incident(s) occurred, witnesses, if known. Does the child /victim know this referral is being made?)*

7. Action taken

7.1 Has the matter been referred to civil authorities? Yes No

If yes: Date Time

If no: Explain why

Who was it referred to? Name

Designation:

Address:

Tel: E-mail

7.2 Has the matter been referred to Committee Members?
Yes No

If yes: Date Time

If no: explain why

Who was it referred to? Name

Designation:

Address:

Tel: E-mail

8. Next Steps

What actions were agreed and by whom when the matter was referred onto civil / Church authority?

Are there any immediate child protection concerns? If so please record what they are and state what actions have been taken by whom to address them:

9. Designated Officer Details

Date form sent:

10. Details of person completing the form

Name

Tel

Mobile

E-Mail

Position

Parish

Form completed: Date

Signed

(A copy must be retained by the recipient and filed in a secure location, and a copy must be sent to the designated officer and civil / statutory authorities and Bishop)