



# **MATERO CARE CENTRE**

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OPERATION GUIDELINES**

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# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## 1. PREAMBLE

Matero Care Centre is a local CBO that in working with the poor at the grass roots and promotes the well being of over children whose lives are directly impacted by HIV/AIDS. Care and concern for Children are the heart of Matero Care Centre. The vision is there to: provide quality, affordable, effective healthy care and support to HIV positive children as well as promote healing, development and protection of the children who are HIV infected or in Matero Township.

As a reflection of our commitment to the vision and considering the fact that children are often vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, MCC places highest importance to protection and safety of children in all its dealings. Protection is a right of the child in every given society or community. MCC commits to comply with the standards for child protection designed to safeguard children from exploitation, neglect, sexual and physical abuse. MCC continually examines the need to reduce the risk of children in its Programmes. Therefore these Standards for child Protection are intended to keep children safe from possible abuse and exploitation by Staff, sponsors, communities and others with whom they are in contact. This policy also intends to increase the awareness on child protection in the community and in the family. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) shall be the guiding principle for implementing basic rights for all children up to the age of 18 years. The Zambian Government acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the child in 1991, and is committed to its full implementation for the benefit of children. However, there are a number of systems and policies in place that govern child protection issues, and there is a National Child Policy (2006) of the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development geared to strengthening coordination and regulatory framework.

## **Zambia**

Zambia has signed and ratified many of the key international and regional instruments, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 2008. However, there are gaps in the domestication of these instruments into national law.

This Policy is in conformity with the above laws, MCC's Statement, core values, Partnership policy, on Child Protection, Customer Relations Service standards and Human Resource Policy of the organization.

**The procedures and guidelines for implementing the Policy are outlined in the following 10 sections;**

- i. Awareness Raising
- ii. Program Planning
- iii. Personnel – Screening and Recruiting
- iv. Behavior Protocols and code of conduct
- v. Allegation / Incident Management Plan
- vi. Visit to Matero Care Centre Programs
- vii. Advocacy on child protection and child Rights
- viii. Communications about children and Photographs
- ix. General Confidentiality of child information
- x. Partner Organizations - Agreements

## **2. Procedures and Guidelines**

### **i. Awareness Raising**

#### **MCC will...**

- Promote regular awareness on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including their right to protection, MCC Staff, Board & Society members.
- Promote awareness of rights of children among community leaders, community volunteers in the communities in which it works, including children and the general public.
- Ensure Project Staff are given specific child protection training and skill enhancement.
- Facilitate in establishing local Child Protection Committees in the communities it works, consisting of community leaders, key officials from Government, Medical Professionals, and Police officers of the local area, judiciary and Project Staff to help in implementing.
- Facilitate in establishing child help lines and network with cooperating agencies like UNICEF, Social welfare and similar child protection NGOs.

### **ii. Programme Planning**

#### **MCC will...**

- Incorporate into its project design activities that focus on Child protection in the framework of United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UN CRC).
- Intentionally design the Programmes in projects to move from child welfare approach to Child Rights approach and engage children (age appropriate) in program Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation.
- Plan programs to reduce risks facing vulnerable children and to address particularly the needs of children who are in situations of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- Design programs addressing the causes of abuse such as threats/vulnerabilities/existing violations and promote responses that support family and community responsible for the well being of children and the prevention of child abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- Plan for rehabilitation of children who have been abused, traumatized and exploited, are developed in the best interests of the child by enhancing and maintaining safety security, and reducing the risk from further harm.

### **iii. Personnel Screening and Recruiting**

#### **MCC will...**

- Recruit staff only after obtaining adequate background verification from references and MCC's own sources for any history of child exploitation, neglect and abuse.
- Ascertain their aptitude, interest and sensitivity in working with children and their previous work with children. Prospective employees, Board and Volunteers are informed of MCC Child Protection Policies at the start of any recruiting process and they are also screened similarly.
- Enhance capacities of staff working with children in projects, to effectively deal with issues of child rights and advocacy, to promote rights of children and to provide protection from exploitation, neglect and abuse.
- Ensure that all work and activities of staff supports the protection of all children in communities from any form of exploitation, neglect and abuse.
- Ensure that personnel exercise behavior protocols consistent with the Mission Statement and Core Values in their relationship with children, in the context of their language, actions, dress, and behavior.

#### **iv. Behavior Protocols and code of conduct**

##### **MCC ...**

- Personnel including staff, volunteers and consultants will establish an atmosphere conducive for the development of children through their word, deed and demeanor. This includes listening to children and showing respect to them.
- Staff, consultants, volunteers and visitors including sponsors will respect the local cultural context and behave in appropriate manner with children in communities as per the behavior protocols.
- Personnel including staff volunteer and consultants will not allow project children to visit their homes under any pretext without the prior knowledge and agreement of their superiors.
- Staff will not employ children as domestic workers in their homes.
- Personnel including staff, volunteers, consultants and visitors will not spend time alone with a child or children. There will always be another adult who will be able to see the interaction. The exception to this may be in the event where personnel are employed as professionally recognized trained counselors.
- Personnel including staff, volunteers, consultants and visitors are always responsible for the interaction between an adult and a child even when it appears that a child is acting in a provocative manner.
- Personnel including staff, volunteers, consultants and Visitors will not touch private parts of the body, or a touch which will make the child uncomfortable.

#### **v. Allegation/Incident Management Plan**

##### **MCC...**

- Program Manager or the in-charge must report to Victim Support Unit (VSU) under the police any incident of child abuse in the project, of the alleged incident and will facilitate police enquiry, medical support, and provide necessary moral/physical and legal support as appropriate.
- If MCC Staff/Contract Staff/ Board are involved in any form of exploitation, neglect, or abuse of any child or failed to follow the behavior protocols the Program Manager will call for appropriate action.
- Ensures investigation will be treated with care, concern and in absolute confidentiality.

#### **vi. Visit to MCC programs**

##### **MCC will...**

- Encourage visits to the centre that are informed in advance and with the consent of the family/community.
- permit a visit to a child or children on the programme only when;
  - a) it is announced
  - b) The appropriate background checks as per local law are completed
  - c) The visitor has agreed in writing to abide by the behavior protocols and local code of conduct
  - d) The visitor is accompanied by an MCC staff and child's Parent/guardian or a member of the community.
- Permit the visitor to meet the child in the project in a central location, usually the MCC Project office, their home or community, accompanied by a project staff and child's parents/guardian or a member of the community, but the meeting will not be in a private place.

- Whenever permitted by local Law, criminal record screening of sponsors/visitors prior to visit will be carried out. If the screening leads to denial of the sponsor's request, the Offices will be informed, so as to prevent the sponsor/donor attempting to visit directly.
- Ensure that communities and families participating in sponsorship and other Programmes will be advised of MCC's procedures regarding sponsor and other visits to the project. They will be encouraged to report immediately any visit that has not been arranged through MCC. The Director or his/her designee will in such case take up the matter with the visitor and alert the appropriate Support Entities.
- In the event of actual or suspected cases of child abuse or inappropriate behavior by a visitor the Program Manager or in charge should immediately report to the VSU. Appropriate action will be initiated immediately with the visitor/sponsor, which may include criminal investigation and severance of relationship of the sponsor with MCC.
- Support offers to provide for social service activities in the project target area by interested parties/groups only when the visit is considered by MCC to be in the best interest of the children. These groups will be asked to sign to agree by the behavior protocols and local code of conduct.

#### **vii. Advocacy on child protection and child rights**

##### ***MCC will...***

- Endeavor to influence relevant changes in public policy that will support Child Rights and provide protection to children through advocating at different levels of administration and Non-Government Organizations.
- Encourage, promote and develop research activities that will support such advocacy efforts to seek structural and system changes for child protection and to promote children's participation in securing their rights.
- Collaborate and network with agencies engaged in Child Rights and Child Protection for sharing knowledge and spearheading movements to secure the rights of children.
- Actively network with Churches, Governments, Non-Government organizations and Human Rights Commissions in organizing and participating in campaigns, seminars on Child Rights, and also lobbying and advocating with decision makers for necessary changes/amendments to child related legislations.

#### **viii. Communications about Children and Photographs**

##### ***MCC will...***

- Ensure that all communication material on children in the form of pictures/captions are decent, dignified and respectful, and will not present children as victims, nor will exaggerate/glamorize poverty at the cost of the child. They will abide by MCC communications reporting standards with regards to vulnerable children.
- Ensures that written permission (consent) is obtained from the parent/guardian if the child is under age.
- Ensure child personal and physical information that could be used to identify the location of child in the projects should not be used on MCC websites or in any other form of communication about a child.
- Ensure individuals or organizations requesting the use of MCC resource such as videos or photographs should be required to sign an agreement with the appropriate personnel as to the proper use of such materials.

**ix. General Confidentiality of child information:**

**MCC will...**

- Ensure Projects are protected and safeguarded records and documents under key and lock of children and maintain their confidentiality.
- Share Information about a child protection incident shared with people only if it is deemed necessary by Child Protection monitoring group.
- Ensure names and identities are not to be disclosed to outsiders or to the media.
- Child abuse incidents to be flagged as confidential and handled with care and concern.

**x. Partner Organizations - Agreements:**

**MCC will...**

- Ensure all written agreements with partner organizations include a clause referring to child protection and the expectation that the partner organization will have a child protection policy of its own or agree that its staff will abide by MCC child protection behavior protocols.
- Initiate action to any Non-compliance of Child Protection protocols.