

**INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC MOVEMENT FOR INTELLECTUALS AND
CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

ICMICA PAX ROMANA AFRICA



PROTECTING THE RIGHTS, DIGNITY, AND WELFARE OF A CHILD

POLICY DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION

The International Catholic Movement for Intellectuals and Cultural Affairs (ICMIICA-Pax Romana) is a Catholic lay movement, composed of professionals and intellectuals with a spirituality of action at the service of human dignity and the common good in human society. Its members, as professionals and intellectuals, seek to bear witness to the Kingdom of God through their lives and their commitment to the various contexts in which they are present, to spread the Gospel in the environments in which they are engaged, and to contribute to the edification and renewal of the Church at the local and universal level.¹

The MIIC-ICMICA-Pax Romana is a global network of continental federations of Catholic professionals with a presence in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Oceania, committed to evangelization in the professional and intellectual sphere. MIIC-ICMICA- Pax Romana is recognized by the Holy See and actively participates in international civil society networks. It has a consultative relationship with the United Nations.

In the African society, everyone, the Church, the community, and the caregiver has a special and collective responsibility to ensure the safety and prosperous wellbeing of the African child. In this regard, if there is suspicion that a child is suffering abuse and or neglect, it must be reported to the relevant authorities. Most of the countries in Africa are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and they make it an obligation for us to facilitate a conducive environment for the child to grow up, maximizing their full potential, and being valuable adults in the society. The primary responsibility of the parent is to ensure that a child's rights are idealized; however, this is a joint effort together with the government, the church, and the professionals as well as the community/ society. In this regard, everyone, especially us, as Catholic professionals must take up an active role in doing what we can to keep the child safe.

This is the major reason why we should be on the lookout for the red flags to be able to report them correctly to the relevant authorities.

¹ Art. 3 of the Statutes as amended at the 29th Plenary Assembly, Poland, July 2004. Plenary Assembly, Poland, July 2004.

Objectives of this Policy

For the personnel and members of the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs Pax Romana Africa (ICMICA Africa), the policy “protecting the rights, dignity, and welfare of a child” sets down the minimum principles that ensure that the rights of children are safeguarded. The partners of ICMICA are required to abide by the guidelines as well, whose intent is to support a holistic approach collaboratively to child abuse and neglect.

The International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs will do this through:

- i. Observing and providing relevant information, reporting cases and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.
- ii. Availing information on international laws and policies relevant to child welfare and rights to life and growth.
- iii. Elucidating on the roles and responsibilities of the caregivers, while highlighting their accountability in responding to suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. They also should ensure that the responses are sensitive and reproducible to the children’s needs.

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I. ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

The International Catholic Movement for Intellectuals and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA-Pax Romana) is a global network of Catholic leaders and professionals from over 60 countries committed to the evangelization of the professional and intellectual milieu. Since 1946, ICMICA has been a space for global reflection and action on issues of concern for Catholic lay leaders and lay professional organizations. Pax Romana ICMICA is recognized by the Holy See and is active in international civil society networks such as the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations. It has a consultative relationship with the United Nations. In Kenya, KMCP is the official representative of Pax Romana - ICMICA at the UNEP/UNUN-Habitat. ICMICA is an international association of the faithful, with private juridical personality according to canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canon Law. The aims of ICMICA are to:

- Support the deepening of the faith and the coherence of life of its members;
- Support the process of constant formation of its members in spiritual matters, in commitment, and in professional and intellectual matters by way of exchange of experiences, shared study, openness to the Word of God and the celebration of, and participation in, the life of the ecclesial community, in communion with the local Church, in which it is present, and with the universal Church;
- Serve as witness of the Gospel in the various communities and environments with which it is involved and to contribute intellectually and professionally to a proactive dialogue between the Christian faith and cultures, and between faith and reason;
- Act in defense of human dignity and human rights, for the construction of true peace on earth, for the eradication of all forms of poverty and injustice, and for sustainable development in harmony with nature;
- Pursue its entire works on behalf of society in the light of the Social Teachings of the Church, and especially through the professional and intellectual contributions of its members;
- Contribute to the path of ecumenism seeking the growth of communion between all Churches and Christian communities; and to be in dialogue, peace and understanding among religions.

In Africa, ICMICA has national federations, each with a unique name. These include: Benin (Mouvement des Intellectuels Catholiques du Benin); Cameroun (Mouvement des Intellectuels Catholiques du Cameroun); DRC (Mouvement des Intellectuels Catholiques du Congo); Ghana (Pax Romana ICMICA Ghana); Kenya (Kenya Movement of Catholic Professional (KMCP)); Rwanda (Union Xavéri des Adultes de Kigali); Tanzania (Christian Professionals of Tanzania (CPT)); Zambia (Zambia Association of Catholic Professionals); Uganda (Catholic Association of Professionals of Uganda (CAPU)); Madagascar (Fédération des Secrétariats des Intellectuels et Professionnels Catholiques de Madagascar); Togo (Mouvement des Intellectuels Catholiques du Togo), Zimbabwe (Catholic Professionals Network of Zimbabwe). We also have contact groups that are in the process of becoming full affiliated federations in Botswana; Ethiopia; Lesotho; Malawi; Namibia; Nigeria and South Sudan.

II. FORMS AND TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child Abuse- Definition: The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), Articles 15, 16, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 indicate child abuse as injuries inflicted on a child physically, mentally, socially, sexually as well as psychologically.

1. Physical Abuse

This form of abuse is physical and involves one or a combination of hitting the child, scratching them, beating, suffocating, burning them with hot solids or liquids, throwing items at them, drowning them in water, or poisoning the child. The intent of all these is to cause physical harm to the child, meaning the actions are deliberate. During disciplining the child, the abuse takes the form of use of excessive violence. This leads to bruises, scratches on different parts of their bodies, and fractures of bones and skulls. While this punishment may be done to a child by a different person, the child may also take part in self-harm activities. The injuries have a spectrum from minor to severe, and in extreme cases, this leads to incapacitation and even death.

A delay in getting the appropriate healthcare when it is evidently necessary is also a reason for worry and concern.

2. Emotional Abuse

This is the consistent emotional torture that makes the child feel worthless and unloved. Hurtful words are uttered to the child repeatedly and they have severe repercussions on the child's

emotional development. The child also is silenced all the time or from time to time, and they get the inability to express themselves freely. The child is, therefore, unable to participate normally in social activities with peers. Communication is curtailed and this interferes with learning. This greatly limits a child's potential and adds to the existing trauma caused by suppressed childhood memories, among them physical abuse among other stressors. It also involves bullying which puts the child in a perpetually fight or flight mode and this escalates to anger, anxiety, and tension. Withholding affection also has negative impacts. Emotional abuse may occur at the same time or separately from the other forms of abuse. Witnessing domestic violence in the home is also etched in the child's mind/memory and is a main cause of trauma, a factor of emotional abuse.

3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse entails forcing or luring a child into participating in sexual activities with or without their knowledge and their consent. Sexual activities are physical either through penetrative or non-penetrative acts. Penetrative includes oral sex, and rape while non-penetrative involves masturbation, inappropriate touching of the child's body parts, and fondling and kissing.

Exposing the child to pornographic materials also falls under this category, as well as exposing them to sexual activity, and grooming them for adult sexual roles. Both men and women are perpetrators of this vice, as well as other children.

4. Neglecting the Child

Neglect is the consistent and maybe deliberate lack of attention and cares to meet a child's needs. The needs may be the basic physical needs and or psychological. This is ultimately detrimental to the child's well-being and health. Prenatal, neglect occurs when the mother abuses drugs and substances. This deprives the child of an essential environment for development. Neglect also takes several other forms as the parent, or guardian not providing food, shelter, clothing, and healthcare protection from harmful elements and risks, in a way that the child is exposed to harmful factors that are an impediment to growth. Acts of commission and omission by those who are the child's caregivers have grave emotional effects.

III. THE RIGHT OF A CHILD

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) provides that children have unforfeitable rights that must be maintained by all persons and institutions. They are:

1. The Right to Life (Art 5): Every child has an implicit and integral right to life and it is the responsibility of the State and the family to ascertain and secure the welfare of the child, from survival to development.
2. Best Interest of the Child (Art 4): The best interests of the child are predominant at all times. This is applicable in all events that touch on the child, whether taken on by the court of law, administrative and or legal authorities, or private or public welfare bodies.
3. Child's Opinion (Art. 7): On any issues that affect the child, the opportunity to express his/her opinion must be availed. It must be appropriate to the age of the child as well as his/her level of maturity.
4. Non-discrimination of the Child (Art. 3): the child must not be discriminated against on the basis of his background, sexual identity, religion, beliefs, customs, language, color, circumstances of birth, opinions, socio-political-economic status, tribal inclination, disability or where they live.
5. Right to Parental Care (Art 19 and 20): The child has the right to live together with, and to be taken care of by his parents. In the cases where the child is separated from his family, with the courts not privy to this, the state must assist and facilitate for the child to be reunited with the family.
6. The Right to Education (Art 11): The right to education is the entitlement of every child, and this responsibility falls squarely on the government and the parents. It is the right of every child to access education, and this is mandatory in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28.
7. The Right to Religious Education (Art 9): It is the right of the child, with the guidance of the parent/ guardian to have access to religious education.
8. The Right to Healthcare (Art 14): The parents together with the state must ensure that every child has access to quality healthcare and medical help. (Art 4,9)
9. The Right to Leisure and Recreation (Art 14): Every child is qualified by the right to explore all leisure and recreational activities appropriate to them both culturally and artistically.

IV. SAFEGUARDS, PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR THE CHILD

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) stipulates that there need to be precautionary measures for children that should protect them from all forms of exploitation, abuse and neglect.

These measures are as below:

1. *Protection from Child Labor* (Art 15): The child has the right to be protected at all times from activities that exploit them economically, and those that put them in danger as well as interfere with the right to education, health, and general wellbeing.
2. *Protection from Armed Conflict* (Art 22): No child should participate or be made to participate in aggressions, recruited into the army, or exposed to armed conflicts. It is the right of every child to be respected, protected, and cared for according to the provisions of the last. It is the primary responsibility of the government to protect and rehabilitate the child into society in cases where the child may have been a victim of the scenarios of either armed conflict or natural calamities.
3. *Protection from Child Neglect and Abuse* (Art 16): It is the right of the child to be shielded from abuse, both physical and emotional, and neglect and all forms of victimization that include trafficking and kidnapping by any person or entity.
4. *Protection from Harmful Cultural Rites* (Art 21): The child must not be subjected to harmful cultural practices by any person or entity for instance female genital mutilation, early marriages and other backward traditional practices that impact unfavorably on the child's health, self-regard, and worth, and their psychological as well as physical development.
5. *Protection from Sexual Exploitation* (Art 27)- Every child is entitled to protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, by being used in acts of prostitution, being forced and lured to engage in sexual acts, and being exposed to lewd and repulsive materials.
6. *Protection from Drugs* (Art 28): It is the right of every child to be protected from drug and substance use and abuse at all stages- from production, consuming, illegal dealing and the distribution of the drugs. The harmful drugs include and not limited to psychoactive drugs that alter sensations (psychedelic), tobacco and alcoholic beverages.

7. *Protection from Torture and Deprivation of Liberty* (ART 16): No child should be subjugated, and subdued to cruel torment and penalization and this includes life sentences and death penalties, being arrested illegally, or the restriction of their freedom and autonomy.

V. RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

1. Talking with the child

A person working in the helping profession working with children has existing relationships with them that involve mutual trust. This is supported by literature *British Columbia Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect for Service Providers*.

Due to this atmosphere of truth as a service provider, the child may approach us to disclose an issue of abuse and or neglect or we may observe peculiar behavior that leads to the same conclusion.

In this case, the first step is to report to the authorities as a way of honoring the child and respecting the disclosure. Before this, the service provider may make a judgment call as to whether the information on hand is sufficient, and whether to ask more questions for clarification.

2. When the child raises concerns of abuse or discloses abuse

Apart from the child, any other person is able and allowed to report cases of child abuse, whether they have experienced, witnessed, or have been informed about the same.

Anyone that comes forward with information should be treated compassionately and with empathy. Provided by an ambiance of unconditional support, warmth, and acceptance by the service providers. All complaints must be listened to and resolved compassionately and professionally. An allegation or disclosure of abuse should be treated with utmost seriousness and care.

For a person to come forward to disclose an incident of abuse or neglect, it takes a lot of willpower and courage and service providers must be keen to listen actively while being cognizant of the victim's emotions.

A victim of abuse is very vulnerable and care should be taken to avoid potential triggers either verbal or non-verbal cues. This is because upsetting them and unearthing traumas happen in a split second.

Our role is to get as much information surrounding the incident as possible while supporting the vulnerable child and reporting to the welfare officer(s).

It is the prerogative of any child to share any issue when they are ready and willing to do so and may not be compelled to do the same. At the same time, there is no mandatory requirement necessitating the reporting of abuse or neglect during childhood for any service provider.

In the case of the above, there are procedures that are followed to ensure proper guidance to the personnel handling the matter:

i. Staying calm and listening actively

When a child has gone through a traumatic experience- abuse or neglect, it is important that you remain calm as this reassures the child that you are in control of the situation and are ready to help. When you exclaim, seem surprised, or shocked, the child may withdraw and retreat to their safety net and this makes them afraid to disclose the issues and hence the child may fail to get help. Being calm and listening assures the child that help is available and instills hope in them. Being calm also ensures that the person is in control of themselves and is able to carry out the duties of a service provider impartially without excitement that may be alarming to the child.

ii. Skillful questioning

Avoid curiosity questions- 'why' questions and utilize questions that only help you understand the situation better. What, who, where, and when questions give a better insight into when the child reports an incident involving abuse. Do not judge, and show empathy, as prodding the child for information is not only insensitive but also traumatic to them. Information presented to you by the child may make you uncomfortable as you may be unsure of how to react, however, accept all that is said by the child. Be gentle and do not rush to get to an end. Questions like '*would you tell me what happened*' are open-ended and will motivate the child to shed light on the matter.

The use of closed ended questions puts the discussion at a deadlock and the answers are usually yes and no, and the caregiver is not able to get much helpful insight from the responses.

iii. Reassurance

This involves being supportive and reassuring the child of shared confidentiality. While the child has done the right thing by coming to you for help, you need to inform them that you would need to disclose the concerns to relevant parties to safeguard their concerns. All information received is shared with the Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO) and/ or Deputy Child Safeguarding Officer.

This applies to everyone in the helping professions whether religious, counseling, lay, or ministry. Reassuring the child gives them confidence and a promise of certainty to assist.

For anyone that discloses the information shared by the child even in conversation, it must be relayed to the CSO or Deputy CSO.

iv. Get to the point

This involves gathering of the essential facts and not reckless questioning. Once you establish important information on the when, who, what, and how, to support the child emotionally, there will be more intense questioning by the relevant officers in child welfare, and in criminal cases, by the authorities (police). Do not appear as though you are blaming the child as this becomes counterproductive and the child will be unwilling to disclose information. This will frustrate the primary goal of the exercise which is to help the child. Why questions indicate a blame game scenario and the child will be reluctant to engage and it will therefore be at the point of disclosure and reporting for resolution.

v. Keep the child updated

When a child discloses an incident of abuse, they feel vulnerable as it is essentially personal information. While you should not promise secrecy, assure them that they made the right decision by coming to you and that you are doing your best to help. As you reassure the child, do so realistically. Do not make outrageous promises for instance the perpetrator of the abuse will not get into trouble. Be transparent on the process to be followed as this clears of all anxiety and worry that the child has. Where you are unsure of the process, take up the issue with the CSO or Deputy CSO. By having clear communication on the expectations of both parties, the burden of doubt is cast away and this improves trust, an important pillar for service providers.

vi. Do not delay

Move from accusations and innuendos and proceed to actionable steps. When a child reports to you, in as much as offering psychosocial support is important to emotional wellbeing, it is not the supreme step. Safeguarding the welfare and safety of the child is. This must be immediately reported to the CSO and Deputy CSO. This is also the case if you are unsure of both the criminal nature of the case as well as whether the person reporting is under 18 years.

vii. Avoid challenging

Do not confront any of the related parties about the issue, be the parents of the child, the perpetrator him/herself, the guardians, or the teachers. Confrontational tactics make all the parties defensive and it is impossible to move forward when everyone feels attacked.

viii. Making notes:

After the disclosure session with the child, it is important to write as much of the information as possible. This ensures accuracy as well as evidence in court when it comes to that. Once you have made your notes, relay the same either verbally or in writing to the CSO or Deputy CSO, for both incidents that happened long ago or are recently ongoing. Notes are important also for reference and record keeping.

ix. Reporting:

When a child is suspected to have undergone abuse, it is the moral obligation of the personnel and leaders to report to the CSO or Deputy CSO as soon as possible. When reporting fails to happen, it is considered a serious failure to secure the child as well as the safeguarding policy, and this leads to disciplinary action against the person whose responsibility was to report.

3. Core Procedures for Responding to a Concern

When a concern is raised to the CSO or Deputy CSO, there is a procedure to be followed immediately. All evidence, and information that is disclosed privately as well as suspicions must be acted upon with speed. Due to the nature of the child abuse and neglect being sensitive, all cases that have been put forward must be regarded with utmost seriousness keeping in mind confidentiality and ethical guidelines in order to protect the rights of all persons that are involved in this matter, specifically the child

The procedure is as below:

- i. *The age factor-* It is important, as reasonably as possible to establish without doubt the age of the child. Upon confirmation that the child is below 18 years then the guidelines must be followed. If upon putting forward the incident, the CSO or Deputy CSO is not able to ascertain the age of the child, the guidelines must still be adhered to. In case of abuse or neglect and the person is 18 years and or above, then the HR policies and procedures must be referred to.

- ii. *Instant Action*- There may be cases when the child required protection urgently. When the child is in looming danger, protective steps must be taken immediately by the relevant personnel- and the CSO or Deputy CSO.
- iii. *Concern Form*- This is a form that must be filled in by the CSO or Deputy CSO, and this is after receiving the complaints and disclosures.
- iv. *Reporting to the Government Authorities*- When allegations and suspicions are reported to the CSO or Deputy CSO, the 2 officials, or the relevant personnel, the issue must be forwarded as soon as possible to the respective state organs- either the local authorities or security organizations. This is in cases when the violations are in contravention of the national laws. This enables investigations to be carried out and for legal action to take its course. When this happens, the CSO's role is to report these incidents as violations of the laws of the land but not to oversee the resolution of the cases. This is not a blanket provision as there are some countries where such disclosures put the child at risk and expose him/her to further harm if they are reported. In cases like this, there must be a Child Safeguarding Committee whose role is to discuss the matter and give requisite assistance.
- v. *The staff or members*, when a staff member or a member of ICMICA is suspected of perpetrating child abuse or neglect, the person must take compulsory leave and even be temporarily barred from working until a time when investigations have been duly carried out and concluded. This helps with the autonomy of the inquiry. When a member or a staff is culpable of breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy, there will be strict disciplinary action against them. These actions are guided by the HR policies in place as well as the national laws of the country that which the organization operates. When the person is found culpable of the misconduct, what follows is the termination of the contract and being dismissed summarily. In the case where the member of staff is involved in the abuse and neglect while they are not within the organization's reach, either off duty or if the children are not within the care of ICMICA Africa, the national law is supreme.
- vi. *Social and material support*- ICMICA Africa endeavors to provide psycho-social support where possible to children who have been maltreated through physical, emotional, or psychological abuse. There is also facilitation of Medicare and psychological support by the ICMICA Africa Secretariat. These provisions are open and the survivors are free to take them up whenever they choose to.

- vii. Proving the complaints- On some occasions, upon thorough investigations, the allegations may be found fictitious, and it is established that the abuse did not occur. The ICMICA Africa will work with the concerned parties in managing and restoring the reputational risk of the alleged abuser, now innocent. As they would have been summarily dismissed, and their contract terminated, the person will be reinstated to their position without undue delays.
- viii. Involving the children- Children have several rights stipulated, (Child's Opinion Art 7), which impresses on the child's rights to be heard, listened to, and opinions considered with seriousness. This is while taking into account the age factor and the level of maturity and understanding. They are to be consulted in all the matters that relate to their lives and welfare.
- ix. Involving the parents- While the children have the right to be respected, this goes hand in hand with the right of parents and guardians to be respected. In this regard, they must also be actively included in matters pertaining to the welfare and safety of the child. This is a precarious situation, and when there is a conflict between the interests of the child and those of the parents, the interests of the child must take precedence.

VI. PREVENTING HARM TO CHILDREN

a) Recruitment

- i. **Job Description and Recruitment of Personnel-** For all appointments to the positions, the job descriptions and advertisements must explicitly state that the prospective candidates will be carefully vetted and must commit to adhering to our Child Safeguarding policies and procedures.
- ii. **Application form-** On all application forms, there must be a child safeguarding declaration form that references the Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures.
- iii. **Interview –** When the application form does not specify a specific role, the interviewer must ask the prospective candidate questions that indicate their suitability to work with children while highlighting any perils that may be an impediment to work performance.

The queries should bring out the candidate's values, and prejudices in relation to the position's requirement of child protection.

- iv. Checking of References-** Upon shortlisting and consideration for appointment, the candidate must provide written references who must categorically state whether the candidate has shown inability or reasons that they are not able to work with children. The references must also disclose on the phone, on reference form, or in-person if there are any child safeguarding concerns, allegations, investigations, or convictions to the effect. The person must not be considered for the position until proper referencing has been done and concluded.
- v. Confirming the Identity-** Once shortlisted, the candidate must furnish the organization with sufficient and verifiable identification documents and proof of the relevant qualifications to support the application.
- vi. Police Clearance-** The shortlisted candidate must provide documents showing clearance by the national police (if applicable).

Note: For instances where third-party entities are contracted to recruit personnel, all the stated procedures must be scrutinized to ensure that they comply with the policies.
- vii. Self-Disclosure and Acceptance-** Once a candidate has been shortlisted or a new member joined the movement, she/he must read the Child Safeguarding Policy and must append his/her signature on the Child Safeguarding Self-Disclosure and Acceptance Form (Appendix 1). For a new staff, this must be done before issuance of the Offer Letter for employment.
- viii. Agreeing to adhere to the Policy-** All new staff or a new member of ICMICA carrying official duty must sign the Acceptance Form for the policy explained above and commit to agreeing to its requirements before the Offer Letter is issued to them. This is conditional. If a person is uncomfortable with the requirement and refuses to sign the letter, and if their roles require that they interact with children in any capacity, the staff must be asked to step aside from the position, whether they are on remunerative terms or on a voluntary basis.

- ix. **Appointment-** Once appointed to the position, the job description must be availed to him/her, and it must contain the affirmation that they will adhere to the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. For all new staff, there will be mandatory induction to familiarize themselves with all the related child safeguarding concerns. This should be done by the Child Safeguarding Officer.
- x. **Probationary Period-** It is imperative that there is a probationary provision in the employment contract. This ensures that the hired personnel comply with the existing policies on child safeguarding before being confirmed for employment for the position.

b) Training

- i. **Induction.** Within two weeks of starting the official duties of the position, there must be an induction session of the new staff on the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. All personnel and leaders of ICMICA Africa, that are directly and indirectly dealing with children must be trained on the requirements of the position so as not to endanger the children and to be able to use the correct procedure and channels in reporting incidents and allegations of child abuse and neglected to the CSO or Deputy CSO.
- ii. **Regular Trainings-** Training must take place from time to time for all members and all the employees to make sure that they are cognizant of their roles and responsibilities while disseminating their duties. The training is facilitated by either the CSO or Deputy CSO and entails the process of reporting concerns, the disciplinary actions in case this is not done, and the role of the staff in making sure that they get the procedures right the first time. The records of training must be documented and archived for easy retrieval in the future.
- iii. **Counseling sessions-** While the nature of this work calls for one-on-one counseling sessions, not all staff are bound by this requirement.
Open spaces or rooms- In some cases that call for therapy sessions with the child, the session should be conducted in an open and spacious area. This may be by leaving the door (s) open, and having transparent glass windows. This helps in ease of observation for the benefit of both the counsellor and child.

- iv. **Notifying the management-** When a one-to-one contact is anticipated, care must be taken to extenuate the risks to the child and in such circumstances, the line supervisors must be notified for awareness and as a precautionary measure for the children that are involved in the process.

c) Media, Audio, and Visual Recordings

Articles 16 and 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child indicate the right of every child to privacy and to protection from all forms of exploitation.

- i. **Identity of the child-** During interviewing the child, there may be the use of audio and video recordings. Kindly uphold privacy and ensure that the child is not at risk of being exposed or painted in an unfavorable light. Personal information that includes their full names, residential addresses, the host communities, images, or allusions to landmarks that indicate where the child lives must not be disclosed. If a story has the potential to put the child or their image at risk, their siblings or peers, it should not be published. This applies also in cases where the identities are hidden or blurred out. Use the child's first name and a location that is true but large and remotely familiar to avoid raising any guesswork as to where the child lives.
- ii. **Dignity of the Persons-** While the use of audio and visual recordings is useful, care must be taken to ensure that the photos and videos used do not undermine the child's dignity and sense of self-worth. Even with editing the content and context must be true and not skewed to a particular outcome for example portraying extreme suffering to whip up the emotions of the masses. The safety and well-being of the child must be the priority. In this regard, a true picture should be showcased and not distorted to make a situation look worse than it is on the ground.
- iii. **Child images should be empowering-** There are photographic skills to be employed that give the impression of authority. Do not use aerial images as the images seem to 'make small' or belittle/ condescend to the child in the eyes of the viewers. The images should be at eye level, or while looking up at the child especially when you want to bring out the theme of

vulnerability. As professional service providers, it is advisable to ensure that the child looks straight into the camera and have them in positions that exude positivity and empowerment.

iv. **Avoid implicative and revelatory images-** The children must always be properly clothed. There are poses that are construed to be sexual and erotic, and in other cases, images that are not meant to be suggestive are sexualised by other people online. Ensure that the images have no room for misinterpretation.

v. Our expectations from our partners

Our expectations of organizations that collaborate with us are that they should uphold the highest standards of child safeguarding procedures.

When we get wind of a concern regarding a partner organization on the breach of the policy, we reach out and expect the partner to respond swiftly. As required, we work cohesively with the partner to address the root cause. We follow the laid down procedures that may involve independent inquiries and they should not interfere with any investigations that are governed by the legal entities. Upon the conclusion of this matter and the finding is that child abuse and neglect occurred, and continuing work with the partnering organization must exclude the named abuser.

VII. CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT AND AUTHORIZATION

The Committee of the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a person who is below 18 years of age and ICMICA Africa is committed to this definition. The Committee has impressed on countries to review the requirements of the age, even as the legal threshold of 18 years allows the person to vote or consent to sex, it does not alter their vulnerabilities as children.

The convention indicates that the child has express rights to be protected from acts of aggression whether physical or mental, abuse and exploitation as well as harm and trauma.

As ICMICA Africa, we will see to it that:

The child's welfare takes precedence. All concerns and statements that confirm or deny facts and require proof must be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, and acted upon in accordance with the existing policies and procedures.

To ensure full participation of children, we shall support them by making them feel valuable by actively listening to them and being respectful.

Every member (including volunteers and interns) will have access to this policy document and they are required to be conversant with their duties and responsibilities. A formal briefing session shall be organized in this regard.

The Regional Team of ICMICA or the Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO) will provide training, create learning opportunities and provide the necessary support with regard to child safeguarding issues.

The contact details of the CSO and the office of the ICMICA Africa will be shared out for ease of communication. Any concerns on child safeguarding must be raised to the CSO or Deputy CSO, and it is the responsibility of the personnel to do this without needing prompting.

Information on the reporting process of allegations and suspicions of abuse must be accessible to all our staff and clients, including the children.

Maintain a robust hiring practice that will ensure that only personnel that complies with the policy and procedures will be recruited. There will be no hiring of staff with a questionable conduct that could be a risk to the safety and welfare of a child.

The guardians of this policy are the managers and leaders of ICMICA Africa. They are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the policy is implemented and they must sign the commitment form.

Designated Child Safeguarding Officer

Name: Perlargia Kapuya

Mobile/Landline: +263772702077

Location: Harare Zimbabwe

Deputy Designated Child Safeguarding Officer

Name: Atranus Method

Mobile/Landline: +255767562408

Location: Tanzania

Approval and dissemination

This policy has been discussed and agreed upon by the affiliated members of ICMICA-MIIC Pax Romana, and will be published on ICMICA website.

Nairobi, 20th August 2020



Dr. Fredrick Wamalwa

ICMICA Pax Romana Africa President

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Child Safeguarding Self-Disclosure & Acceptance Form

In accordance with the Committee of the Rights of the Child, the monitoring arm for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ICMICA Africa is devoted to protecting all children that are below 18 years. The Committee encourages states to relook the age of the majority of the children if it is set below the age of 18 years.

The convention posits that children have a right to be protected from all forms of violence, whether physical and or mental, injury, abuse, and from being exploited, and this includes sexual. In line with the stipulations of the Convention, persons that work or volunteer with ICMICA Africa must work and adhere to good practice and consciously keep the children from harm’s way while interacting with them.

In addition to this, all the persons must declare the below:

Have you ever been convicted of a sexual or child safeguarding offense or are subject to an ongoing sexual or child safeguarding investigation?

Yes No

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offense(s), case(s), or allegation(s):

Have you ever been the subject of disciplinary procedures or been asked to leave employment or voluntary activity due to inappropriate behavior towards a child?

Yes No

Full Name (Print):

Any name previously known by:

Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ **Place of Birth:** _____

Declaration: I understand fully that if I am found out to have kept back any information or given false or inaccurate information above, I may be laid off from my position whether as a member of staff on pay or volunteer, without advance notice. I commit to upholding confidentiality in all the works and projects that I undertake. In case an allegation is made against me, I must inform my line supervisor as soon as possible.

I herewith state that the information I have provided is accurate and to the best of my knowledge.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 2: Child Safeguarding Acceptance Form

I, _____ as a member/ worker/ volunteer/ visitor of ICMICA Africa agree that I have read and understood the policy on child safeguarding and that I will abide by the policies and statements specified below. The opportunity to ask questions and get clarity on points that I did not understand was availed to me.

I will:

1. Treat all children equally, observing their personal dignity regardless of their age, gender, language, tribe, religion, disability, opinion, or other status.
2. Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with our child safeguarding policy.
3. Apply the following self-assessment questions regarding my professional boundaries:
 - Am I dealing in a different manner with a particular child than with others under the same circumstances?
 - Is my dress/availability/language different from normal with a particular child?
 - Would I do or say this to a child if a colleague were present?
 - Would I condone my conduct if I observed it in another adult?

I will never:

4. Have sexual intercourse or participate in any form of sexual activity, including paying for sex, with any person under 18 years old or under the local age of sexual consent (where higher). This applies to all personnel regardless of the age of consent locally for social, cultural, or religious reasons.
5. Seduce nor be seduced into any form/act of sexual activity with children.
6. Share a bedroom with or sleep close to an unsupervised child or children. This does not apply in the situation where the child or children chose to sleep close to their primary carers/guardians/parents.
7. Invite individual children to my home when not in the company of others.
8. Spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
9. Use language or behavior towards children that is harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, or that is intended to shame, humiliate or emotionally abuse or place a child at risk of abuse.

10. Seek to make contact or spend time with any child with whom I come into contact as part of my work except as part of the designated activities set out in my role.
11. Abuse my position to withhold professional assistance or give preferential treatment, gifts or payment of any kind to a child, or another person in relation to a child, in order to solicit any form of advantage or sexual favor from a child.
12. Hit or physically assault a child irrespective of cultural norms, including as a form of discipline.
13. Use computers, mobile phones, video, and digital images to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium.
14. Do things of a personal nature for a child with whom I come into contact as part of my work that the child can do for themselves (e.g. toileting, bathing, dressing).
15. Visit a child's home alone or invite unaccompanied children into my own accommodation, where that child/children are ones with whom I come into contact as part of my work.
16. Put a child at risk of harm through inaction (including failure to report a concern).
17. Condone or participate in any child-related activity which is illegal, exploitative, unsafe, or abusive; this includes behavior by other children.

Signature:

Role:

Name of the Organization:

Date: