

Kerk in Actie Child Safeguarding Policy

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Introduction

Kerk in Actie works towards a world in which people can live in dignity and well-being, a world without poverty and injustice. Kerk in Actie works with poor and marginalized people, promoting basic rights and justice, including child rights.

We have a zero tolerance approach to child abuse and exploitative child labor. We respect children's right to participate, and ensure priority is always given to the best interests of the child. This document describes our policy with regard to child safeguarding practices. Kerk in Actie follows in this respect the guidance being given by the ACT Alliance.¹ This policy complements the ACT Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse which all Kerk in Actie staff adheres to.

Principles

We recognize the following principles:

- All children have equal rights to protection from harm and exploitative child labor.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- We have a duty of care to children with whom we work, are in contact with, or who are affected by our work and operations.
- The partner organizations we work with have a responsibility to meet the minimum requirements on protection.
- All actions on child protection are taken in the best interest of the child, which are paramount.
- We adhere to local and international child protection legislation in countries we are working, as well as international laws and conventions in relations to all forms of child abuses and child exploitation.

Definitions

Child protection: Child protection is a term used to describe the actions that individuals, organizations, countries and communities take to protect children from acts of harm, maltreatment (abuse) and exploitation e.g. domestic violence, exploitative child labor, commercial and sexual exploitation and abuse, deliberate exposure to HIV infection or physical violence.

Child safeguarding: Child safeguarding is the set of policies, procedures and practice that we employ to ensure that our organization itself is a child safe organization. This means that we ensure:

¹ ACT Alliance Child Safeguarding Policy, May 2015

- anyone who represents our organization behaves appropriately towards children and never abuses his or her position of trust;
- everyone associated with our organization is aware of and responds appropriately to issues of child abuse and the sexual exploitation of children; - a child-safe environment in all our activities by always assessing and reducing potential risks to children.

Child abuse: Abuse happens to male and female children and includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, bullying, discrimination, child labor and domestic violence. Abuse can be inflicted on a child by men or women, as well as by children and young people themselves.

Child Labor: The International Labour Organisation ("ILO") defines "child labour" as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and - interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. There shall be no recruitment of children and children under 18 years of age shall not be employed at night or in hazardous conditions, including any work which is likely to jeopardize children's physical, mental or moral health, safety or morals. This shall be ensured in terms of the *ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999* and the *ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Work, 1973* which lists the following minimum age for employment:

Hazardous work: Any work which is likely to jeopardize children's physical, mental or moral health, safety or morals should not be done by anyone under the age of 18.

Basic Minimum Age: The minimum age for work should not be below the age for finishing compulsory schooling, which is generally 15.

Light work: Children between the ages of 13 and 15 years old may do light work, as long as it does not threaten their health and safety, or hinder their education or vocational orientation and training.

Scope

This policy applies to all Kerk in Actie staff and associates. In our daily work, staff of Kerk in Actie do rarely work directly with or are in direct contact with children. However, even in programs which are not child-focused, there can be inherent risks to children. Therefore, all employees of Kerk in Actie have to be aware of the Child Safeguarding Policy and have to sign and abide the Code of Conduct in this respect.

Partner organizations that are in direct contact with children and with whom Kerk in Actie has a

financial relationship, will be required to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Implementation

Kerk in Actie publishes the Child Safeguarding Policy and the Code of Conduct on its website. Current employees have to be aware of this policy and are informed individually. Kerk in Actie communicates this policy to their local partners with whom they work with.

All new staff must read, sign and abide by the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct. This will be included in the recruitment procedure.

The Child Safeguarding Policy is included in the general conditions of contracts with partner organizations of Kerk in Actie.

This policy has been adopted by the General Director of the Ministries of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (to whom Kerk in Actie belongs). All managers are required to notify and communicate the existence and content of this policy to their employees.

Child safeguarding measures (i.e. signing of the Code of Conduct by staff and by partner organizations as part of the contract) are checked via periodic audits.

All employees are obliged to report a breach of the Code of Conduct by a staff member or another person employed by a partner organization. This can be reported to the first manager in line. The manager will inform the General Director of the Ministries of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands about the received report. Where the alleged wrongdoing relates to the conduct of the manager, the case should be reported to the General Director. In this case, the report can also be made to the external Complaints Officer at GIMD (meldpuntgoededoelen@gimd.nl).

All reports should be properly investigated following the Complaints and Appeal Procedure Kerk in Actie. During the investigation, the safety of the child has to be ensured. In all cases the set-up and outcome of the investigation are shared and approved by the General Director.

If a staff member or other person associated with Kerk in Actie is found to have abused or exploited a child, disciplinary measures will be taken.

All information about child protection concerns and reports is to be kept confidential, discussed only with the manager or the General Director.

Any allegations which prove to have been maliciously or knowingly false will be viewed as a serious punishable offence. Any personal interest should be made known when first raising concerns.

Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

I, [insert name], acknowledge that I have read and understand the Kerk in Actie Child Safeguarding Policy, and agree that in the course of my association with Kerk in Actie, I must:

- treat children with respect regardless of race, color, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status
- not use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate
- not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children
- not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible
- use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium
- not use physical punishment on children
- not hire children for domestic or other labor which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury
- comply with all relevant legislation, including labor laws in relation to child labor
- immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures
- immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with Kerk in Actie that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, I must:

- assess and endeavor to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child
- obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used
- ensure that photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive
- ensure that images are honest representations of the context and the facts
- ensure that file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form if permission from a parent/guardian has not been granted.

I understand that the onus is on me, as a person associated with Kerk in Actie, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviors that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse.

Signed: