

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Chapter 1 Statement of Purpose

The African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (AFRONGO) is an inclusive membership organisation of NGOs and their networks as well as 'un-networked NGOs', which subscribe to and support the organisation's vision, mission and values. It provides a regional platform for NGOs in their diversity, active nationally and regionally; to contribute to governance and development processes across Africa.

The Council is an umbrella organisation for NGOs operating at the local, national, sub-regional and Africa regional levels. It was founded by a group of NGOs out of their concern to avoid duplication of NGO efforts, and to minimise conflict and competition between NGOs. The founders were also interested in ensuring maximum use of resources mobilised by NGOs for relief and social development purposes through collaboration, networking, and mutual reinforcement of each other's activities.

The purpose of this document is to define AFRONGO's core values and commitments to children, who in line with the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are defined as all people under the age of 18 years. These values and commitments define AFRONGO's collective identity, establish AFRONGO's accountability, require adherence to the highest standards, and promote an organizational environment supportive of AFRONGO's work to ensure children's well-being, rights, and protection.

While the Child Protection Policy remains consistent with African NGO Council's African Child Protection Alliance, AFRONGO maintains its own policies, values or rules or regulations and defines the procedures and practices for implementing this Child Protection Policy under Child Protection Guideline. This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated to comply with Africa regional legal systems and international standards and best practices for child focused agencies.

Chapter 2 Application

AFRONGO and its Board Members, employees, volunteers, partners, contractors, members and other organisational representatives (all of whom are collectively referred to hereafter as "AFRONGO representatives") adhere to the common values and commitments set forth in this Child Protection Policy in their work or operation with or through AFRONGO. Furthermore, the Policy applies to AFRONGO representatives outside the course of their work or operation with or through AFRONGO. This policy is meant to be used in tandem with its companion policy, the AFRONGO Code of Conduct.

AFRONGO's sponsors, donors and other supporters are required to comply with the Child Protection Policy when interacting directly or indirectly with children and beneficiary communities.

Chapter 3 Core Values

AFRONGO adopts the following values in regard to children.

Dignity and intrinsic value of every child: We facilitate the creation of a safe environment that promotes the dignity and intrinsic value of each child, regardless of ethnicity, race, color, language, religion, opinion, gender, origins, birth status, ability, or belonging to a particular group.

Children's right to participate: We recognize that children are active and competent contributors to their own development with the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives in accordance with their development or evolving capacities.

Empowerment: We encourage the empowerment of children to develop capacities for self-protection and advocate on their own behalf for issues that concern them.

Respect for children's rights: We promote the four core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): non-discrimination; the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.

Chapter 4 Commitments

AFRONGO is committed to the promotion of children's rights, the creation of safe, protective environments for children and the prevention of all forms of child abuse, exploitation, harm and neglect.

To ensure the highest standard of protection for children, AFRONGO commits to work proactively to promote children's safety, their common and equal rights, and their rights to participate.

AFRONGO specifically prohibits its representatives from the following:

Discrimination

Definition: Discrimination consists of unequal treatment of children based on personal or group characteristics. There are many forms of discrimination based on characteristics such as, but not limited to:

Religion

Religious discrimination is defined as treating a child less favorably than another on grounds of his or her religion or belief, or lack thereof.

Ethnicity

Ethnic discrimination entails negative or degrading treatment on the basis of one's ethnicity (racial, cultural, national or tribal background).

Gender

Gender refers to the social differences between males and females. Gender discrimination occurs when either males or females are privileged over the other group.

In most societies, gender discrimination entails the privileging of males over females, who are denied equal power, status, access, and rights.

Language

Language discrimination occurs when a child is treated differently and/or negatively for the way he/she speaks or the language he/she uses to communicate.

Disability

Disability discrimination occurs when a child with physical, emotional, social or communicative impairment is denied right to education, health care, birth registration or recognition of legal capacity equal to a child without disability.

Commitments:

- AFRONGO prohibits discrimination against children on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, gender, language, or any other characteristic
- AFRONGO supports religious, language and ethnic diversity and tolerance amongst its representatives and beneficiaries.
- AFRONGO creates environments that protect and enhance the rights and opportunities for persons with disability in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

Harassment

Definition: Harassment consists of inappropriate comments; behavior that is offensive, demeaning, intimidating, or physically harmful. It may include physical harassment (assaults, impeding or blocking movement), unwanted attention or verbal harassment (labeling or use of nickname.) Harassment can be relative to race, ancestry, place of origin, color, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, and sexual orientation, and age, record of offence, marital status, family status or abilities status.

Commitments:

- AFRONGO prohibits all kinds of harassment of children by its representatives.
- AFRONGO will endeavour to maintain an environment that supports the dignity and self-esteem of all children it reaches through its representatives.

Sexual Harassment

Definition: Sexual harassment in regard to children is defined as conduct of a sexual nature. It includes, but is not limited to comments, leering, sexually suggestive gestures, or visual displays or degrading jokes of a sexual nature.

Commitment:

- AFRONGO prohibits expressly sexual behavior and behavior that is sexually suggestive or oriented towards children.

Sexual Exploitation

Definition: Sexual exploitation is the abuse of power to entice or coerce others into sexual activity, exercised on a child by an adult or a child upon another child. It includes, but is not limited to, prostitution of children, sexual abuse, child pornography and forms of transactional sex wherein a child is coerced into sexual activities to obtain access to necessities such as food, shelter or education.

Commitments:

- AFRONGO prohibits sexual activity between its representatives and children (people under the age of 18 years) regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- AFRONGO prohibits exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex with children, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to children and/or their families.

Exploitation

Definition: Exploitation is the abuse of power by coercing or leading children into activities or situations that humiliate and violate their rights. It includes but is not limited to all forms of child trafficking (selling or buying children for economic gain or in any way supporting such practices), hazardous forms of child labor or recruitment or use of children in armed forces or groups.

Commitment:

- AFRONGO prohibits exploitation of children in any way or form.

Neglect

Definition: Neglect of a child occurs when there is a recurring failure to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk. It also includes abandonment and withholding of necessary medical treatment.

Commitment:

- AFRONGO facilitates the provision of basic needs and care for children to realize their full development potential.
- AFRONGO prohibits neglect of children and endeavors to provide appropriate care and to meet basic needs for children through its representatives.

Abuse

Definition: Abuse involves a sustained pattern of verbal, physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment that result in damage to the child's health and/or psychological development. It can take the form of threatening, ridiculing, ignoring or isolating the child. It may also include exposure to violence such as when a child witnesses domestic violence or is directly exposed to family violence civil violence, or armed conflict.

Commitment:

- AFRONGO prohibits all forms of abuse of children and endeavors to maintain a positive environment for healthy child development.

Chapter 5 Reporting

All AFRONGO representatives are obligated to report violations of this Policy in accordance with procedures established in the Child Protection Guideline and as required by respective law.

Chapter 6 Amendment and Abolishment

Amendment to and abolishment of the Policy shall be duly deliberated and resolved by the General Assembly of AFRONGO.

Supplementary Provisions

- The effective date of this Child Protection Policy starts as of March 27, 2018.