

# **POLICY ON SAFEGUARDING/PROTECTION OF CHILDREN/ YOUNG PERSONS**

## **1. PREAMBLE**

This Policy is grounded on various child rights legislations namely, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; The Ghana Children's Act, Act 560 and the Ghana Child and Family Welfare Policy (2014); as well as the Child Protection Policy of the Daughters of Charity, Province of Nigeria. The Policy holds as its primary consideration the welfare Principle of the "Best Interests of the Child" and is for the protection of "every child" who comes in contact with Street Children Project (SCP), without "discrimination" of class, gender, religious affiliation, tribe or any other judgment.

This Policy was formulated by all staff and volunteers of SCP who served in the Project at the period of its preparation. The Policy was approved by the members of the Board of Management of SCP after careful study and reflection.

This is the third edition of Street Children Project Policy revised in June 2019.

## **2. Background of Organization**

Street Children Project (SCP) is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) which is concerned about the plight of children, particularly young girls on the street of Kumasi, thus, undertake to provide various services to children in street situation in Kumasi and other parts of Ghana towards reintegration and rehabilitation.

Street Children Project was established by the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi, to address the problems of vulnerable children and young women who live on the streets of Kumasi City. The SCP is managed by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul, a female Religious Congregation of Catholic sisters founded in 1633 for the service of the poor. The Daughters of Charity have their general headquarters in Paris – France and their Provincial headquarters in Nigeria, West Africa.

SCP is located in Kumasi- the capital city of the revered Ashanti Region, a very important and historical center for Ghana. Kumasi is the second largest city in the country.

Kumasi is located approximately 270 kilometers north of the Gulf of Guinea. It has an estimated population size of 2,035,064 people. Kumasi being a major route of Ghana has been identified as a major transit point in the trafficking of child labour (Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, accessed 9/8/2010).

Street Children Project is made up of the management, the staff and volunteers who work in the establishment. SCP management and staff are directly accountable to the legal owner- the Catholic Archbishop of Kumasi, the Provincial leadership team of the Daughters of Charity Province of Nigeria, and the major partner organizations who fund the project activities (KZE/Misereor and Adamfo Ghana). The SCP is supported by a Management Board whose members are appointed by the office of the Catholic Archbishop of Kumasi.

## **3. Strategic Objective**

Street Children Project exists to support children and young adults on the street with the aim of motivating them to build up a more stable future, through rehabilitation programs, support in basic

education and skill training.

#### **4. Vision Statement**

Street Children Project envisions that all children live, grow and are cared for within their homes; that no child spends its childhood on the street.

#### **5. Mission Statement**

Street Children Project is committed to address the reality of children on the streets of Kumasi, by reaching out to help them explore other options in life, offering enabling services to motivate them towards reintegration, empowering them by providing opportunities for education, and enterprise development.

#### **6. Purpose of Child Protection Policy**

The United Nations Conventions (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a broad framework highlighting the importance of protecting every child from abuse, neglect, danger or exploitation. Thus, this policy is to implement the UNCRC within the context of our services. Street Children Project is committed to the welfare of children especially the helpless and homeless children in street situation. As a group, the Project, staff, volunteers, family and stakeholders has a responsibility to operate effective systems to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable young persons.

The Government of Ghana following the UNCRC enacted the Children's Act (560) to provide guidelines within the context, and in a more recent time the government of Ghana further demonstrated its commitment to Child Protection by drawing up a National Policy called Child and Family Welfare Policy, 2014.

In response to all these Child Right Legislations, Street Children Project demonstrates its commitment to Child Protection by drawing up this Child Protection Policy. This policy is a step down of the above legal framework and in line with the Daughters of Charity Provincial Child Protection Policy.

This Child Protection Policy is founded on the welfare Principle of

the “Best Interest of the Child”. This implies that all interventions relating to child protection shall be undertaken considering the best interest of the child as paramount.

## **7. Policy Statement**

The child protection policy of SCP is therefore formulated according to the following:

- i. That every possible and right measure is put in place to protect children from abuse.
- ii. That none of our personnel or volunteers engage in behaviours that could allow abuse to occur or actions that could be misinterpreted by children, their families, or other adults as constituting or leading to abuse.
- iii. That in their relationship with the Project, all children and young persons involved in the services of the Project are protected from physical and emotional harm, including all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse (including sexual abuse), neglect, maltreatment or exploitation.
- iv. That all staff of SCP and volunteers are dully educated/ informed on child safe-guarding/ protection and Child Right
- v. That the SCP applies safeguards in the recruitment and selection of new staff and volunteers

## **8. Principles/ Beliefs**

The Organization believes in/that:

- i. Every child is a gift of God and has a right to dignity of life and bodily integrity, which must be respected, nurtured and protected and to be raised in an environment free from abuse or neglect.
- ii. Every child is to be treated with respect, care and dignity in all areas of interactions - within the centre and on the street.
- iii. The SCP Child Protection/Safeguarding policy would be

reviewed every three years.

iv. The child centred approach in dealing with children

v. The responsibility of every staff to protect every child under our care

vi. The best interest of the child as paramount

vii. The principle of prevention, protection and prosecution in our child safeguarding

## **9. Induction**

It is the responsibility of the Director of the Street Children Project to ensure that as part of their corporate induction, all new members of staff are given detailed briefing on Child Protection and are made aware of the SCP Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy.

## **10. Definitions/Forms of Child Abuse:**

i. Child

The Ghana Child and Family Welfare Policy, 2014 recognises a child as a person below the age of 18 years. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1992 Fourth Republic Constitution of Ghana (article 28) and the Children's Act 1998, (Act 560) (section 1). This policy also takes into account how a child is defined in the Ghanaian context in relation to the family and concept of childhood. Thus, a child is one who is still largely dependent on an adult for the necessities of life.

ii. Child Protection

Child protection is a broad term that covers policies, principles, safeguarding, standards, guidelines, practices and procedures all aimed to protect children from intentional and also unintentional harm. It refers to any activities undertaken to protect, and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse against children. Safeguarding is an aspect of child protection.

### iii. Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to any action or behaviour done to a child that inflicts pains/injury, or failing to act to prevent harm emotionally, physically or socially on the child. It includes neglects of the child's basic rights and needs.

The UN Connecticut Department of Children and Families further defines child abuse as follows:

A non-accidental injury to a child which regardless of motive, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by the person responsible for the child's care. It includes: any injury which is at variance with the history given; maltreatment such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.

### iv. Types of Abuse

The World Health Organization (WHO) distinguished 5 types of child abuse:

1. Physical Abuse
2. Sexual Abuse
3. Emotional Abuse
4. Child Neglect
5. Exploitation

#### **1. Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any physical injury inflicted other than by accidental means; it includes any form of handling that is harmful to the child, physically and emotionally. Such but not limited to the following:

- a. Shaking a child
- b. Handling a child with excessive force
- c. Flogging a child

- d. Deliberate poisoning
- e. Striking and shouting at a child
- f. Suffocation
- g. Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child
- h. Head injuries
- i. Bruises, cuts, or lacerations
- j. Internal injuries
- k. Burns, scalds
- l. Reddening or blistering of the tissue through application of heat by fire, chemical substances, cigarettes, matches, electricity, scalding water, friction, etc.
- m. Injuries to bone, muscle, cartilage, ligaments fractures, dislocations, sprains, strains, displacements, hematomas, etc.
- n. Death

## **2. Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Any form of sexual behaviour initiated by an adult with a child or young person is termed, sexual abuse. This can be immoral, amoral and criminal.

There may also be indirect sexual abuse of children, for instance, where children are being photographed, videotaped, or filmed for pornographic purposes.

## **3. Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the actual and likely persistent attacks on a child that can result in and/or affect the emotional and behavioural

development of a child. It includes any actions (gestures, words, behaviours) that deliberately cause children to feel afraid, anxious, in danger, corrupted, exploited, annoyed, put-down or discouraged. It may involve making a child to feel worthless, unloved or even lose its self-esteem. It involves neglecting to show adequate love and attention, not making the child feel secure and worthy, or verbally assaulting the child by belittling, being sarcastic, and intimidating. Emotional abuse involves:

- \* Constant belittling
- \* Degrading
- \* Taunting
- \* Humiliation
- \* Isolation
- \* Intimidation
- \* Bullying
- \* Harassment

#### **4. Child Neglect**

Child neglect is failure to provide for the basic needs of a child. Neglect refers to an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development caused by deprivation from basic needs e.g. food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults and medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a time rather than at one specific point. It is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs that is likely to result in significant harm.

Neglect is the failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide and maintain adequate food, clothing, medical care, supervision, and/or education.

## **5. Exploitation**

Child exploitation implies treatment of a child as an object to be used, bought or sold for the gains of another person. It is an abuse of power and is detrimental to the child's physical and mental health, development and education for the profit and gains of the person or group exploiting. Child exploitation includes; Sexual Exploitation: - using a child sexually for profit or gain. Physical or Commercial Exploitation: - using a child's labour for profit or gain.

## **6. Other Forms of Abuse;**

### **a. Bullying**

Bullying is increasingly recognized as harmful to children and adolescents. It involves physical intimidation, verbal or emotional intimidation. It may include racist and sexist remarks or isolating or excluding a child. It always involves a less powerful person experiencing deliberate hostility.

### **b. Peer Abuse**

In some instances of child abuse, the alleged abuser may be another child or young person, in such situations there are important child protection issues in relation to both children, and the needs of each child should be considered separately.

### **c. Discrimination on the grounds of Ethnicity and Religion**

Discrimination can be considered as an abuse against children/ persons. It involves the treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction towards, a person based on the group, class, or category to which the person is perceived to belong. This unjust treatment of children, especially on the grounds of ethnicity (or region they hail from) or religious denomination they are affiliated to can be very detrimental to the growth of children; as it seeks to destroy their confidence, self-esteem etc. rather than promote their development.

## **11. Role of Child Protection Officer, Assistant Protection Officer and the Media**

### **i. Administrative Officers**

Street Children Project has the following as internal administrative officers:

- a. The Project Director
- b. A Child Protection Officer
- c. Assistant Child Protection Officer.

### **ii. The Role of the Project Director**

- a. To deal with media queries concerning complaints of abuse.
- b. To ensure that all staffs and volunteers within the Project gets basic education on Child Safeguarding.
- c. To provide logistics on child safeguarding
- d. To ensure that all staff and volunteers maintain confidentiality on client issues

### **iii. The Role of Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer**

- a. To ensure that all staff and volunteers in the Project get basic education on child protection/safeguarding.
- b. To provide information on child protection within the SCP.
- c. To receive and consider all child protection concerns within SCP and ensure that policy and procedures are followed.
- d. To maintain appropriate records in line with the rule of confidentiality.
- e. To inform parents/carers (if possible) if a report is to

be submitted to a legally constituted authority.

- f. To ensure that all staff and volunteers maintain confidentiality on client issues

#### **iv. The Role the Assistant Child Protection Officer**

- a. To follow-up issues pertaining to child abuse on behalf of the SCP particularly in her unit of operation (the Day-Care Centre).
- b. Represent the Child Protection Officer when the need arise.
- c. Accountable to the Child Protection Officer and Project Director.
- d. To ensure that all staff and volunteers maintain confidentiality on client issues

#### **v. The Current Administrative Officers**

- a. Sr. Olivia Umoh - Project Director
- b. Jessica Deh - Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer
- c. Judesca Comenentia - Assistant Child Protection Officer.
- d.

### **12. Safe Recruitment Procedures for Workers:**

#### **i. Recruitment of Workers**

Street Children Project will ensure to employ best practice in recruitments of staff/ volunteers. For example, during recruitment the following will be made mandatory:

- a. Wide publication of vacancy
- b. Scheduling a formal interview with a panel

- c. Asking for an application letter or providing an application form to be filled by the candidate
- d. Provision of a declaration form for applicants
- e. Requesting for identification documents e.g. national identity card, voter's card, driving license, international passport, etc.
- f. Demanding for references from notable personalities (written)
- g. Definition of staff member/ volunteer roles
- h. Provision of job description

**ii. Safe Management of Workers:**

SCP would endeavour to ensure safe management of workers in the project. This implies the following:

- a. That new staff are given induction e.g. introduction of child protection policies/procedures, introduction of the Mission and Vision Statement of the institution
- b. All staff/volunteer will get a copy of this policy
- c. That the institution demands for written acknowledgement from staff of having understood the Child Protection Policy
- d. That there is strict observation of staff during probationary period
- e. That staff induction includes understanding and caring for children.

**13. The Policy**

**i. Procedure for Allegations of Abuse against workers**

Street Child Project will adopt the following simple complaint procedure for use by children/young people, their parents/guardians as well as staffs and volunteers within our institutions:

- a. Cases or complaints should be channelled through the Child Protection Officer to the Project Director.
- b. Accused person should not be condemned immediately as the case is reported.
- c. Child safety should be of great concern in every case reported at all times.

## **ii. In Case of Allegation or Suspicion of Child Abuse**

When an allegation or suspicion of child abuse arises against a staff, SCP holds a dual responsibility. The safeguarding of children takes priority at all times. Street Children Project will ensure:

- a. That all procedures are followed in relation to reporting matter to the civil authorities
- b. That all children are safeguarded from abuse.

## **iii. Dealing with the Accused Person:**

The SCP will ensure that proper procedures are followed in relation to the person against whom the complaint has been made, in line with fair procedures and natural justice. The accused person is to be treated as innocent unless and until the contrary is established.

## **iv. Responsibilities of the Street Children Project**

The SCP has a Responsibility:

- a. To protect abused persons under their care, namely; children and young persons
- b. To respond promptly and appropriately to complaints of abuse
- c. To report to civil authorities, formal complaints of abuse received and will encourage/ assist complainants to report any claim of abuse to the civil authority
- d. To offer emotional and spiritual support to the complainant

e. To respect the rights, the spiritual and emotional well-being of the accused person and uphold and respect the presumption of innocence of the person unless/until proven otherwise.

f. To respect the dignity and right of the accused person until the case is properly studied.

**v. Reporting Procedures**

In the system and operations of the Street Children Project, all cases of abuse within the Project are reported to the Child Protection Officer who in turn makes it known to the Project Director. The Officer takes responsibility thereafter to investigate the case and report to the appropriate authority, e.g., the Social Welfare, Child Trafficking Unit, the Police, etc.

**vi. Confidentiality Statements**

As an Organization, the welfare of the child is paramount to SCP. Therefore SCP will protect and treat with utmost confidentiality issues related to child abuse, at any rate, for the best interest of the child.

**vii. Record Keeping**

Street Children Project will ensure that all records are handled with care, as well as insist on accurate and up to date records of all activities involving children, young people, and vulnerable adults. These include:

- a. Attendant register
- b. Accidents and incidents records
- c. Authorization and parental consent forms etc.

#### 14. Code of Conduct for Workers:

All Street Children Project staff and volunteers within our services shall abide by the following conducts. They shall:

- i. Ensure that every child is treated with dignity and respect i.e. to communicate politely, gently and positively with children, strive to know and address each child by name, guarantee that children are not left unattended to, as well as certify that children are supervised by more than one adult.
- ii. Prohibit harmful behaviour by children e.g. rough play, bullying, use of inappropriate words etc. by:
  - \* Give writing assignment to children as punishment
  - \* Endeavour to talk to children
- iii. Ensure information technology is used appropriately
- iv. Ensure that touching of child by an adult is in response to the need of a child not that of the adult and should be done with the child's permission (depending of the age of the child)
- v. Avoid touching a child at sensitive and private zones e.g., breast, buttocks, etc.
- vi. Not do things of personal nature for children which they can do for themselves
- vii. Assist children on things that they cannot do themselves
- viii. Spending time with children or taking them to their homes should be in their best interest.
- ix. Explicit permission should be sort from parent and management when there is the need to take children to their home or your home.
- x. Not use any form of abusive language on children or make any child feel intimidated

- xi. Not discriminate against any child on any grounds such as, gender, colour, race, religion, ability, disability etc.
- xii. Never hit or physically assault a child
- xiii. Not let allegations made by a child go unrecorded or unattended to
- xiv. Never use photographic images of children for pornographic purposes
- xv. Challenge and report potentially abusive behaviour and encourage/pay much attention to training children to talk about their interactions with others
- xvi. Train children to talk about their interactions with others
- xvii. Children should not be shamed in the midst of their colleagues as punishment
- xviii. Employ corrective measures below to children who misbehave in class:
  - \* Use positive reinforcement when a child does something good
  - \* Remove or take something away from the child e.g. toy. Don't use food as a disciplinary measure
  - \* Give a child a time out
- xix. Staff/volunteers of the SCP is must understand their responsibilities in safeguarding children, including the responsibility to conduct oneself appropriately when working with children.

Note: It is important for all employees in contact with children to provide an example of good conduct they would wish others to follow.

## **15. Parental Involvement/Information:**

- i. Parents/adults have important roles to play in the safeguarding of their children, thus SCP shall endeavour to involve them in the following ways:
  - a. Seek parental consent for children/ young people participating in any activity outside normal routine and provide verbal or written information in relation to the activity.
  - b. Provide parental consent form to be used in situations such as above
  - c. Give feedback to parents on the performance/ progress of their children (where/when possible)
  - d. Involve parents in Rehabilitation Plan of their children
  - e. Encourage parents/ families to contribute towards the rehabilitation and future development of their children
  - f. Get parents make some commitments to support children we assist go through their rehabilitation plan
  - g. Parents should be encourage to account for drop-out of children from rehabilitation activities

### **ii. Participation of Children/Sharing Information:**

- a. We shall endeavour to involve children/young people and share with them information that concerns them
- b. We would ensure they are involved in relation to matters and decisions that affect their lives, taking into account their age and level of understanding
- c. Evaluate child's participation/performance and give feedback to him/her
- d. We would train children within our services to share

their challenges or problems with staff and other adults openly.

- e. We would help children within our services to develop a sense of their 'Rights' and what to do if they perceive threats e.g. provide a suggestion box, etc.

**iii. Complaint Procedure for Children, Parents and Workers:**

Children, parents and workers are to direct all reports of abuses as follows:

Case should be reported to SCP Child Protection Officer, the officer having notified the Project Director who would direct the complaint to the designated person (Daughters of Charity Child Protection Delegate) and the appropriate authority who would take up the case to the appropriate legal entity.

**16. Conclusion:**

Every staff member and volunteer within Street Children Project shall be sensitive in thinking about "safeguarding" towards children. The Child Protection/Safeguarding officers of SCP with the Project Director would ensure to supervise, in order to guarantee adherence to the code of conduct for staff.

Management would not allow any complaint relating to abuse to go unattended. All such complaints will be investigated and properly redressed. In all matters relating to abuse the best interest of the child takes ultimate primacy.

A copy of this policy would be made available to all staff and volunteers working in SCP. Students on internship and students on research would be made acquainted with the policy on commencement of their interaction with the Project.

Signed:

Sr. Olivia Umoh, DC

  
Jessica Deh

Msgr. Gabriel Acheampong

  
Chairman,  
Board of Management, SCP

Director, SCP

  
Child Protection Officer, SCP

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## Appendix I

### Contacts of Child Protection Officers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Phone number</b>
Jessica Deh	Child Protection Officer	+233 207 940 619
Judesca Comenentia	Asst. Child Protection Officer	+233 265 124 466
Sr. Olivia Umoh	Project Director	+233 540 264 454

## **Appendix II**

### **List of Accronyms**

SCP = Street Children Project

UN = United Nations

UNCRC = United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child

WHO = World Health Organization

KZE= Katholische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe





