

 <p>People for development</p>	<p><b>DIREZIONE GENERALE</b></p> <p><b>HEAD QUARTER</b></p>	<p><b>Signature</b></p> <p><b>Giampaolo Silvestri</b></p>	<p><b>Norma n°.</b></p> <p><b>DIGE 3/2017</b></p>	
<p><b>Title</b></p> <p><b>CHILD PROTECTION POLICY</b></p>		<p><b>Substitute</b></p>	<p><b>Level</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>Date:</b></p> <p><b>27/01/2017</b></p>

## **AVSI FOUNDATION CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Preamble**

AVSI Foundation is an international non-governmental organisation, founded in Italy in 1972. AVSI's mission is to carry out cooperation projects for development, with particular emphasis on education. In its work, its attention is focused on the defence and promotion of the dignity of the person, the cornerstone of every project.

At present, AVSI is operating in 30 countries around the world – particularly in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Middle East; with over 130 long term projects directly benefiting at least 2,600,000 persons in various sectors.

AVSI's holistic approach includes strong partnerships with local organizations, district authorities and government ministries. AVSI's comprehensive approach aims to improve access and quality of health, reducing HIV/AIDS incidences and supporting those infected and affected; enhance quality of education services; provide economic strengthening and improve livelihoods; improve food security and nutrition status; and ensure protection of children and the communities served. AVSI's programs support the most vulnerable individuals and households, with specific attention to children.

One of the five guiding principles of AVSI's method is the centrality of the person – the focus on the person in all programs, interventions and practices. AVSI recognizes that every person regardless of his/her condition of need is valuable, unique and endowed with resources. This drives AVSI to ensure that all children are cared for, protected and nurtured with interventions that enhance the protective factors and minimize the risk factors within their community, family and school environment.

The AVSI Child Protection (CP) Policy guides AVSI staff, partners, interns, donors, sponsors, volunteers, consultants and visitors, who may come into contact with children through AVSI. The policy specifically guides them in their communication, behavior, standards and norms in relation to children.

The policy demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes it clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps create a safe and positive environment for children, thereby helping AVSI staff to take their duty and responsibility while working with children.



### **Rationale of the AVSI Child Protection Policy**

- 1) To ensure that the dignity and value of the child is at the centre of all AVSI work and will be upheld in every project.
- 2) To uphold equal rights and protection to all children
- 3) To ensure that parents, caretakers and families take a primary and essential role in children's lives in accordance with the best interest of the child.

### **Principles of the AVSI Child Protection Policy**

All social systems and agencies which affect children should be based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). These are:

- i. Non discrimination
- ii. Best interest of the child
- iii. Do no harm
- iv. Confidentiality

AVSI (*Country Office Name*) is committed to safeguarding children from abuse, neglect and exploitation and ensuring that their rights to protection are fully realized in line with the local Government Acts and Bylaw (*i.e. list of Government act and/or laws*)

### **1. Definitions**

**Child:** For purposes of this policy, a child shall be defined as any person under the age of 18 years.

**Child abuse** is an act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to cause harm to a child's safety, dignity and development. This includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

**Physical abuse** involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering e.g hitting, shaking, burning, FGM, or any form of torture.

**Sexual abuse** includes all forms of sexual violence including incest, early and forced marriages, defilement, sexual slavery and involvement in pornography. It may also include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child and showing children pornographic materials.

**Neglect and negligent treatment** is the inattention or omission by the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers. It is also treatment which causes, or has a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm, as much as is feasible (WHO, 1999).

**Emotional abuse** includes the failure to provide an appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a role model, so that the child can reach his/her full potential in the context of the society in which the child lives. These may also be acts towards the child that cause, or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts of emotional abuse may include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, and ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment (WHO,



1999). **Child exploitation** refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development (WHO, 1999). Children being recruited into the army come under this category.

## **2. Codes of behavior:**

### **Acceptable minimum standards of behavior towards a child:**

1. All children should be treated equally and without any form of discrimination
2. Children should be treated with dignity and respect
3. Matters involving children should be treated with utmost confidentiality
4. AVSI management shall ensure maximum safety precaution during the transportation of children in any activity where they are involved.
5. Prior to any activity involving children, informed consent shall be sought and obtained.

### **The following constitute some of the unacceptable behaviors**

1. Involving children in any sexual activity or relationship
2. Involving children in activities at night (unless under the supervision of a trusted care-taker)
3. Depicting children in a demeaning manner (whether published or otherwise)
4. Involving children in any compromising activity or situation.
5. Involving children in domestic work or other forms of exploitation.
6. No staff or collaborator shall intimidate, humiliate or belittle children
7. No staff or collaborator shall engage children in any form of corporal punishment.

The above shall apply to all AVSI staff and collaborators whilst at work but also in their private lives or at their homes.

## **3. Reporting Procedures**

Child protection is the responsibility of every staff member, volunteer and consultant associated with or employed by AVSI, who should act in accordance with this policy to ensure that children are protected. This includes reporting concerns and abuse of children to the relevant authorities, in the appropriate manner and without delay.

Disclosure of such information should be limited to those who need to know for the purposes of protecting the child in question. All staff and collaborators who witness incidents of child abuse have a responsibility to report to the designated officer or the police.

Failure to report constitutes an offence. No staff member shall be penalized for reporting a suspected incident of abuse when it is later discovered to be false, if the reporting is done in good faith. All incidents and allegations of abuse and complaints shall be recorded and forwarded to the relevant designated officers; who shall handle the matter expeditiously and without any undue delay. Information related to an incident will be kept confidential and shared only with those individuals with a justifiable need to know. In this case, the Project Officer (PO) for Child Protection in any given office shall be the responsible officer, unless the Country Representative (CR) designates another person. Where the allegation is against the responsible PO, the report shall be made to the CR; and in case the allegation is against the CR, or any member of the Senior Management Team, it shall be reported directly to the Regional Manager.

AVSI's Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every three years and regularly monitored to check that the policy is being implemented properly and all safeguards are in place.

## 4. Prevention

### **Recruitment**

AVSI strives to undertake due diligence in recruiting and vetting procedures to assess candidates' and consultants' suitability for working with children and their understanding of child protection. This ensures that every recruited person has no criminal convictions relating to children and that he/she understands and commits to the child protection policy and related documents.

The following guidelines should be followed when undertaking recruitment:

- a) The job advert should make reference to AVSI's child protection policy and screening process.
- b) Checks, such as verification of identity should be carried out.
- c) Verification that references provided are genuine and explicitly request that referees confirm they have had no child protection concerns relating to the candidate in question.
- d) Verification of unexplained employment gaps in regard to a potential employee to eliminate possibility of previous dismissal and/or periods in custody as a result of suspicious activity.
- e) Staff must sign the Child Protection Policy in addition to any other policies or Code of Conduct required by each country office.

### **Induction and Training**

The induction and training process for all new staff must include child protection principles, standards, and procedures for dealing with cases of concern. All staff and partners should read and affirm to have understood this document, and the consequences of breaking the guidelines on behavior and the links to organizational disciplinary procedures.

### **Communication**

There will be well-publicized ways in which staff and volunteers can raise concern, confidentially if necessary, about unacceptable behavior by other staff or representatives. The following practices should be adopted by all AVSI staff, volunteers, visitors and consultants:

- a) Avoid sensationalizing text messages and images and present balanced, non-manipulative information with an emphasis on the dignity and value of the person. Use images/photos which do not victimize children.
- b) Ensure there is consent when getting information from the child or taking their photos and inform children and young people (or, in case of very young children, their parents or guardians) on the purpose of the information/photos and the consequences for misuse of information/images.
- c) Keep a record of relevant contact details for child protection services, social services department, police and child protection agencies to share with anyone needing access to them.
- d) All partners and project beneficiaries, including children, need to be aware of this policy.
- e) On the other hand, children should be made aware of their right to be protected from abuse.
- f) AVSI partners, children, parents and guardians should be informed that they can communicate their child protection concerns to AVSI.

### **Ramifications of misconduct**

Any child protection concerns relating to inappropriate conduct of AVSI staff, volunteers, visitors and consultants will be dealt with under the AVSI disciplinary procedures. These disciplinary procedures are binding to all employment and consultancy contracts.



Failure to act upon any child protection concern (reported or suspected) in relation to a third party will also be deemed to be professional misconduct that constitutes a failure on the part of the AVSI staff to safeguard children from real, potential or suspected harm. Any AVSI, staff member, partner, volunteer or consultant who is found to be concealing information brought to their attention in relation to child protection will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

### **Code of Ethics Violations**

The Code of Ethics is an official AVSI Foundation document (<http://www.avsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Codice-Etico-AVSI-ENG.pdf>), approved by the Board of Directors, which contains principles and rules of conduct to be followed by anyone who works or deals with the Foundation, such as partners, donors, beneficiaries. The present child protection policy is considered as an extension of the provision set forth in the Code of Ethics and therefore any violation has to be considered as a breach of the said Code. Compliance with the Code of Ethics is part of the contractual obligations of anyone who works with AVSI Foundation.

Suspected violations of the Code of Ethics must be reported in writing to the Supervisory Authority at the following address:

Organismo di Vigilanza D.Lgs. 231

Fondazione AVSI; Via Legnone 4

20158 Milan – Italy

or by e-mail to: [organismodivigilanza@avsi.org](mailto:organismodivigilanza@avsi.org)



## **SIGNATORIES TO THE AVSI CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

(i) The AVSI Child Protection Policy, signed for and on behalf of AVSI Foundation:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Designation: **Country Representative**

(ii) Signed by AVSI employee/collaborator/partner

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby append my signature to, irrevocably and unconditionally agree to the terms and conditions set out in the AVSI Child Protection Policy which I have read, understood and I commit to respect it.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_