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HELP CHANNEL BURUNDI's PROTECTION POLICY FOR ADULT VULNERABLE PEOPLES

1. FOREWORD

In 2000, Help Channel Burundi was established as an organization for the protection of children and the economic and social advancement of vulnerable and marginalized populations. With the most concern to bring support to the neediest, HCB has built an extensive network of community for efficient interactions to provide integrated care and protection for vulnerable households in order to ensure a healthier socioeconomic environment of both adults and children.

Help Channel Burundi has become an inclusive and sustainable development NGO focusing on child protection over time. It has extensive experience in advocacy for respecting and realizing the fundamental human rights in general, and children's rights in particular. HCB is also committed to building a better future for vulnerables families, both adults and children through innovative approaches, with concrete and sustainable solutions.

More concretely, as a major player in the assistance and protection of vulnerables peoples in Burundi, Help Channel considers that any form of violence against human beings, both adults and children, is unacceptable. HCB claims responsibility for protecting vulnerable peoples from any prejudice in all its actions, regardless of their political, religious, social and regional affiliation.

This policy finds its essence in the Help Channel vision of facilitating and encouraging the participation of people in their holistic and sustainable development by providing them with the support they need first and foremost. It converts into concrete actions the values carried by Help Channel Burundi, namely **Equity, Dignity, Participation** and **Accountability**.

This adults' protection policy is intended to all stakeholders of our organization, including employees, volunteers, interns, caregivers, parents and children.

These different stakeholders have been consulted to make their contributions when drawing up this policy.

This commitment to vulnerable adults' protection is in connection and fits with Help Channel Burundi's institutional culture and builds our cooperative relationships with current and future partners with whom we are working to promote a just, peaceful and reconciled society, in God's Love for all the Humanity.

Cassien NDIKURIYO



The Legal Representative and Chairman of the Board of Directors

2. INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the mission of Help Channel Burundi, all HCB's staff members, including volunteers and interns, are expected to uphold their commitment to professional ethics and Christian values in all their daily relationships and assigned responsibilities. Though HCB's are from various beliefs backgrounds, we are all called to demonstrate good collaboration with one another and all HCB's stakeholders according to Christian ethics. In all their actions, HCB's Staff, including volunteers and interns commit themselves to demonstrating and teaching the ways of the Kingdom of God through principles of simplicity, do no harm, personal respect and respect of others, peaceful coexistence in Christ's love to face and overcome social injustice and violence.

HCB is committed to promoting the security, dignity and wellbeing of beneficiaries, volunteers and staff. In particular we are committed to the safety, security and dignity of adults, either vulnerable or at risk.

Adults who are vulnerable and/or at risk are defined as being any persons aged 18 at least, and who, more over:

- have a particular care, support or special needs and, as a result, can be subject to abuse when they are mistreated, neglected or harmed by other persons who hold a position of trust;
- depend /rely on others for the provision of fundamental basic services/needs due to their social, economic or political contexts (e.g. a person living with physical or mental handicap, living in extreme poverty, deprived of economically productive means such as one living in a refugee camp or as in an IDPs' camp, etc.) and are potentially

vulnerable to exploitation or abuse as a result of their status or lack of power/control; or

- Are socially or professionally in relationship or in contact with another adult who seeks to misuse their position of authority or trust to control, manipulate or dominate them.

HCB's staffs recognise the risks to vulnerable peoples' abuse and exploitation and our responsibilities to keep them safe, during humanitarian emergencies and other development work as part of longer - term durable development efforts. In building safe environments for households where parents are holistically equipped with abilities to uphold and respect children's rights, HCB's staffs develop lasting partnerships and linkages with other representatives of aid and development agencies who do have an important part to play. This means we make sure that they are aware of their protection roles and responsibilities, and that they behave with the utmost professionalism and integrity at all times. For this to happen consistently, we need to have a systematic approach to vulnerable adult protection.

This policy complements, but does not replace, other HCB's policies and Code of Conducts.

3. THE SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to any work implemented or funded through and by HCB, and all HCB staffs, both at head office and field offices, being contractors, volunteers, interns, consultants, project visitors. This policy is also applicable to HCB's grassroots associations' representatives and members like Farmer Field Schools (FFS), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Villages Saving and Loans Associations (VSLA), and Cluster Level Associations (CLAs) in their dealing with HCB programs and projects.

4. THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this safeguarding policy and procedures is to regulate how HCB's programmes, operations and representatives work so that the children and adults it comes into contact with are not abused, neglected or harmed in any way.

The policy applies to all people who work in and through HCB and its partners as they have unique access to adults who are vulnerable/at risk. HCB recognises that all people, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, religious or political beliefs, family background,



economic status, legal status, ability, physical or mental health or criminal background, have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse and is committed to safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable adults that we work with.

Hence, this policy seeks to reduce risks of vulnerable adults who are participants in HCB supported programmes and projects, and to ensure that any acts of rights violation, abuse and exploitation are identified and dealt with if they occur.

5. PRINCIPLES

This adults protection policy is based on the following principles:

- The welfare of vulnerable adults is of primary concern;
- All vulnerable adults, whatever their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, legal status, ability, physical or mental health or criminal background, or any other legally protected category, have the right to safeguarding from abuse;
- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns about abuse to the designated Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point, and the responsibility of the relevant local or national agencies (e.g. police or social services department) to conduct, where appropriate, a joint investigation;
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

All people in positions of responsibility within HCB (i.e all employees in a supervisory level or above) will work in accordance with the interests of vulnerable adults and promote the effective implementation of the policy outlined below.

HCB works with and via grassroots organizations and expects all HCB's stakeholders to uphold high standards of safeguarding based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



6. THE POLICY STATEMENT

Safeguarding is a term used for the set of internal facing, operational policies, procedures and practice that we employ to ensure that our organisation itself is a safe organisation. Best practice is that safeguarding duties extend to whole organisation policies, values and ethos, and include all staff.

HCB Staff must ensure that their behaviour promotes a safe environment and allows vulnerable adults/adults at risk to live free from :

- Harm and Abuse - including physical, sexual (including sexual harassment) and emotional (including the abuse of power/trust and any form of coercion) ;
- Physical & sexual exploitation ;
- Neglect ;
- Discrimination ;
- Human Trafficking.

6.1. Immediate action to ensure safety

Immediate action may be necessary at any stage in involvement with vulnerable adults. In all cases, it is vital to take appropriate action based on context in order to safeguard the adult or adults concerned.

6.2. Recognition of abuse or neglect

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of an adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect an adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults.

A vulnerable adult can be put at risk of harm through a variety of actions, inadequate policies, procedures and failures to act. Abuse can take the form of, though it is not limited to, the following:

- Physical Abuse: Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a vulnerable adult.
- Psychological Abuse: Included in this are emotional abuse, threats, deprivation of contact, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal of services.



- Sexual Abuse: This covers actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
- Sexual exploitation: This is defined as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. In these situations, the potential victim believes she/he has no other choice than to comply; this is not consent and it is exploitation.
- Financial and Material Abuse: This covers exploitation and pressure in connection to wills, property, inheritance, financial transactions or withholding material goods.
- Neglect or acts of omissions: Included in this are ignoring medical or physical care needs, withholding of medication or adequate nutrition and failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services.
- Discriminatory Abuse: Discrimination can be in the form of racist, sexist, ableist, ageist, classist, or other forms of harassment.

HCB Staff need to be aware and alert to the potential abuse of vulnerable adults in any situation, including abuse by HCB staff.

HCB staff should know how to recognise and act upon indicators of abuse or potential abuse involving vulnerable adults and where there are concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare.

There is an expected responsibility for all staff to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a Vulnerable Adult in accordance with these procedures.

6.3. What to do if vulnerable adults reports or talks to you about abuse or neglect

It is recognised that a vulnerable adult may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect, or talk spontaneously as an individual or in groups when you are present.



In the context of some specific programmes implemented by HCB, such as Child – Centered Integrated Community Development Program, or Environment Protection, Food Security and Development of Agricultural value chains program, there may be alternative procedures established for handling reports of abuse or neglect that is not related to the behaviour of HCB Staff or volunteers.

In such cases, the alternative procedures should be followed. In these situations you should :

- listen carefully to the vulnerable adult.
- Allow the vulnerable adult to give a spontaneous account;
- do not stop a vulnerable adult who is freely recalling significant events, unless they become extremely upset and agitated, in which case offer them a break and let them continue later.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the vulnerable adult's presentation as well as what was said.
- Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.
- Use the vulnerable adult's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared - do not offer false confidentiality.
- Reassure the vulnerable adult that: they have done the right thing in telling you; they have not done anything wrong;
- Tell the vulnerable adult what you are going to do next and explain that you will need to get help to keep him/her safe.
- Do not insist the vulnerable adult repeats his or her account of events to anyone, unless as part of an investigation.

6.4. Reporting concerns

If you have a vulnerable adult safeguarding concern you should:

- Report your Concern



- Please refer to the HCB Complaints Policy and Complaints Handling and Investigations Guidelines for further details about the process of how a concern or a complaint is handled within HCB.

Because of your observations of, or information received, you may become concerned about a vulnerable adult who has not spoken to you. It is good practice to ask a vulnerable adult why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused, or respond to a vulnerable adult wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action.

If you are concerned about a vulnerable adult you must report your concerns. In some cases, your concern may be related to a cultural practice that normalises abusive behaviours (for example chaining people with disabilities to their beds). These concerns should be reported and the Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point will then be in a position to either refer this information to a relevant organisation or use the information to inform HCB Protection Programming. to your nearest Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point. If you are unsure who this is, concerns can also be reported to the HCB Safeguarding and Complaints Coordinator.

If you have information which suggests a HCB staff or volunteer :

- has behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a vulnerable adult,
- possibly committed a criminal or unlawful offence against, or related to, a vulnerable adult
- behaved towards a vulnerable adult in a way that indicated s/he is unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults

you must submit a complaint to the HCB Safeguarding and Complaints Coordinator, following the HCB Complaints Policy procedures, as the staff member is in breach of the HCB Code of Conduct and the HCB Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy. The HCB safeguarding and complaints coordinator will then follow the procedures outlined in the HCB Complaints Policy and Guidelines and conduct an investigation if necessary.

If a staff member or other person associated with HCB is alleged to have abused or exploited a vulnerable adult, they will be suspended from their post, with pay, or assigned modified duties until the investigation is concluded. If a staff member or other person associated with HCB is found to have abused or

exploited a vulnerable adult, or otherwise violated this policy, they will be disciplined, up to and including dismissal from their post.

6.5. Confidentiality

HCB staff should ensure that any records made in relation to a reported concern, complaint or referral should be kept confidentially and in a secure place.

Information in relation to vulnerable adult protection concerns should be shared on a "need to know" basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to vulnerable adult protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a vulnerable adult's need for protection.

6.6. Working with partners

Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding policy requirements are included in partnership agreements or contracts with HCB partners, contractors, vendors, interns and consultants.

6.7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years and revised to incorporate any lessons learned during the implementation of the policy.

HCB commits to complying with its applicable statutory and legislative obligations. Accordingly, the specific definitions, terms or concepts used in this policy are for reference purposes only. If necessary, the applicable provincial or federal definitions mandated by the appropriate jurisdiction where an employee is employed, will take precedence and/or will supersede the definitions outlined in this policy.

Abuse: Where the term "abuse" is used in this policy it should be understood to include sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Complaint: A complaint is a specific grievance of anyone who has been negatively affected by the work of HCB or their partner, or who considers that HCB has not fulfilled a stated commitment or is in breach of an HCB Policy. This includes staff behaviour in relation to the HCB Codes of Conduct. HCB will handle complaints in a fair, appropriate and prompt manner. A complaint necessitates a response.

Concern: A "concern" is when there is an issue related to the safeguarding of a vulnerable adult which is not as a result of the behaviour of HCB staff or

partner staff behaviour, and therefore does not result in a 'complaint' against that staff. Instead, a concern must be reported so that appropriate referral or action can be taken in the best interests of the vulnerable adult.

Contact with vulnerable adults: Any interaction with or proximity to adults who are vulnerable/at risk. This includes both intentional and incidental contact.

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

- Anyone who represents our organization behaves appropriately towards vulnerable adults and never abuses the position of trust that comes with being an HCB staff or volunteer.
- Everyone associated with the organization is aware of and responds appropriately to issues of abuse or exploitation (sexual or otherwise) of vulnerable adults.

Partner: an organization that HCB enters into Partnership agreements with to collaborate on a mutually agreed action.

Vulnerable adults: any person aged 18 or over who, additionally, either:

- has particular care, support or special needs and as a result abuse can occur when they are mistreated, neglected or harmed by another person who holds a position of trust or
- the adult is dependent/reliant on others for the provision of basic services because of their context (eg in a refugee camp or as a recipient of relief supplies or in an unfamiliar country/location) and are potentially vulnerable to exploitation or abuse as a result of their status or lack of power/control or
- the adult is in a relationship (social or work), or in contact with, another adult who seeks to misuse their position of authority or trust to control, coerce, manipulate or dominate them.

HCB Staff: Refers to all HCB staff, volunteers, consultants, exposure visit participants, contractors and fieldworkers.

Approved as on 06 / 02 / 2019

On the behalf of Help Channel Burundi
Cassien NDIKURIYO

The National Director

