



Policy & Leadership

Civil Connections Child Protection Policy 2022



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1. Introduction

Our work at Civil Connections and the work we do in collaborations and partnerships, entails directly working with communities across many countries in different corners of the globe. Among, and probably most prominent of these communities in our work are rural – and commonly marginalized communities in relation to resources and power structures in the countries they are located.

Yet even more marginalized of populations in these communities are those that do not have a say in the matters of their communities – those that communities expect to follow, or do as they are told – those that are at the highest risk of rights violation and exploitation in all forms – the CHILDREN. And what does the term child mean? According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is classed as an individual below the age of 18.

But how can we claim to facilitate the development of communities when such an important segment of their population is at risk of being violated, exploited, and alienated? How can we claim to be part of making tomorrow a better world, when the leaders in offspring are violated and have no or limited space for developing their full potentials due to scourges inflicted on their lives due to violence against them?

We, at Civil Connections believe that the rights of children and the protection of these rights – and the children from any form of abuse, exploitation, or denial of self-realization as a child, is at the core of our journey to co-creating sustainable development in all the communities we work in/with. Therefore, we are committed to taking the necessary actions to support child protection actions – based on the guidelines enshrined in the following pages and paragraphs.

1.1. Purpose of the Policy:

This document – The Child Protection Policy – holds the guidelines, actions, values and rules that Civil Connections, its staff or any other person acting in the name of Civil Connections, shall act by to uphold and safeguard/protect children in all contexts we work in/with.

At its core, this policy acts as a framework for identifying situations of potential child rights abuse, so as to avoid these for the protection of the children in our work contexts. It also aims to prevent, respond to, and resolve any potential child abuse while in interaction with or in the presence of Civil Connections staff, partners and collaborators acting in the name of Civil Connections by:

- Laying out, making known and enforcing a no-tolerance policy for child abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence.
- Promoting a common understanding of child protection issues within Civil Connections work contexts and interactions.
- Facilitating best practices development and documentation in relation to child protection in our work contexts and interactions.
- Strengthening our child protection awareness/knowledge, tools, and implementation.

1.2. Scope of the child protection policy

- This Child Protection Policy is not only a moral code that serves as an illustrative guide for Civil Connections, its staff, and collaborators to ensure the protection of children in our work. It is also an integral part of their conditions of employment. This Policy is therefore an appendix to their individual employment or engagement/collaboration contract.
- All Civil Connections staff are responsible for encouraging, advocating, and promoting the dissemination of the Child Protection Policy. They also have a role in implementing, monitoring, and enforcing the policy.
- The leadership of the organization bear the responsibility to see to it that this Policy is upheld – where they both set frameworks and processes for ensuring that all connected staff and collaborators are aware of the policy and supportive frameworks for remembering to follow them. The leaders must also lead by or set a good example in regard to the Policy and regularly review it with all other stakeholders concerned.
- All Civil Connections staff are obliged to report to the organization's leadership whenever they have or hear concerns or suspicions regarding the breach of any components of this policy.

1.3. The key focus areas of the Policy:

- Physical abuse or ill-treatment – for example, hitting or shaking a child
- Emotional abuse – e.g., conveying to a child that he/she is worthless or inadequate
- Neglect – e.g., inadequate care or supervision, leaving a child in a dangerous situation
- Sexual abuse – sexual activity with a child below 18 years or below the age of consent in the country of operation, whether or not the child gives consent
- Commercial or other exploitation – e.g., conducting marketing that misleads children
- Online protection – e.g., inadequate data protection, online bullying or exposure to inappropriate content or contact

1.4. Implementation of the Child Protection Policy:

The implementation of the policy is facilitated by the leadership of Civil Connections that shall ensure that its different components and frameworks of actions, monitoring and review are incorporating in all possible working frameworks of the organization. As a start, the following key guidelines will ensure a proper devolvment of the policy in the organization, its work, and collaborations.

- The Recruitment processes – in the process of recruiting employees or collaborators, Civil Connections shall put in place proper screening of relevant candidates to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children.
- Civil Connections bears the responsibility for training employees who have frequent contact with children, and in this way facilitating and nurturing a child protection culture

- All contracts Civil Connections offers to employees, partners, collaborators shall at the same time bear this Policy as an appendix to how such contractors shall work with and protect children in their work.
- Civil Connections leaderships shall ensure that usable instruments to monitor and report incidents of child abuse and document precautions taken are available and know to all staff members and collaborators.
- Finally, all staff, partners, collaborators and any one or entity working in the name of Civil Connections, are accountable to immediately reporting breaches or suspicions of breaches of this policy to their immediate supervisor, and if appropriate, to the national authorities.

2. Civil Connections – Child Protection Principles

Civil Connections,

- Defines and recognizes a child as any human being under the age of 18 years.
- Is committed to protecting children and ensuring that they gain quality care and nurturing in their everyday contact within our operations and work.
- Considers child protection the responsibility of every individual working with children on behalf of or in connections with Civil Connections work.
- Has put in place this policy, principles, and guidelines for protecting children in all aspects of our implemented by staff, partners, collaborators, and anyone working in the name of Civil Connections to ensure the wellbeing of children in contexts we work in.
- Agrees that the leadership of the organization shall promote child protection and ensure that all staff members are aware of the Policy, Principles and Guidelines.
- Has put in place suitable frameworks and systems for all individuals working with or on behalf of Civil Connections to have access, guidelines of adherence, and ways of monitoring, reflection, evaluation and reporting unwanted incidents.
- Decides that in the event that the Civil Connections Child Protection Policy standards are stricter than national legislation and/or there is a conflict between national law and the Civil Connections Child Protection Policy, the implementing staff or collaborators in the context shall immediately consult with the Leadership for guidance.

3. Civil Connections – Child Protection Guidelines

Anyone working with or on behalf of Civil Connections must never:

- Beat, otherwise physically assault, or physically abuse children.
- Engage in sexual activity or have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 years, or below the age of consent in the community/country of operation. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive. Or act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions or advice which is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised unless exceptional circumstances apply, and previous permission has been obtained from their supervisor.

- Sleep in the same room as a child with whom they are working unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from the supervisor.
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe, or abusive
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Discriminate against, show unfair differential treatment or to the exclusion of others.
- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others in a manner which could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- Expose a child to inappropriate images, films, websites e.g., pornography & violence.
- Place themselves in a position that make them vulnerable to allegations of misconduct.

Civil Connections staff, partners, collaborators, and anyone acting in the name of Civil Connections must:

- Listen, value, and respect all children.
- Talk with children, not to children – and keep a calm and friendly personality that assures children’s safety and trust.
- Endeavor to learn the culture and culture codes in which you are working and the appropriate behaviour and language around children.
- Listen to children carefully if a child has a concern
- Ensure that your contact/encounters with children are safe, fun, creative, learning, and positive experiences.
- Encourage and praise children’s achievements
- Keep a friendly and positive attitude to the children
- Let children know you are there to help them.
- Ensure that children can easily find and identify you as a safe Civil Connections contact.
- Always remember, that you are representing Civil Connections and all our values.

These are not exhaustive or exclusive lists. Staff, partners, collaborators and any other actor representing or working in the name of Civil Connections should at all times avoid actions or behaviour, which may allow behaviour to be misrepresented, constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour – to the child/children under their practice.

NB.

- i. The policy and guidelines have been developed based on examples and our context comparison with other guidelines so as to learn from others, as well as gain a more comprehensive coverage of children related rights and safety aspects.
- ii. We work in partnership with Early Care International (ECI) an Early Child Development focused organization based in Copenhagen that from time to time offers guidance on this policy and reviews and reflection on its implementation.
- iii. We also follow working principles laid down by our Danish Umbrella platform Civil Society in Development (CISU), that from time to time reviews our policies in regard to funding possibilities and our organizational capacity. CISU also represents and infuses the Danish Foreign Ministry and Development components on a rights-based approach – and good practices in nurturing equal and respecting partnerships.
- iv. We have also been hugely influenced by the LEGO Foundation’s perspective on children – especially in relation to their PLAY component.

- v. Last but not least, we pay homage to the UN declaration of Human rights, and especially the rights of the Child.

Summary:

- We hope that this policy gives a comprehensive framework/start point and guidelines towards systematizing Child Protection in Civil Connections' work.
- This Policy shall be interpreted as a dynamic document that shall live through all the other strategies that Civil Connections makes from time to time, as well as being integral to design and implementation of projects and activities.
- The policy is not our copyright – we envision that it is a framework that can be used by other directly or that can be based on for inspiration by actors that wish to develop their own Child Protection Policies.

Happy implementing.

Civil Connections – 2022.

Civil Connections Community Foundation

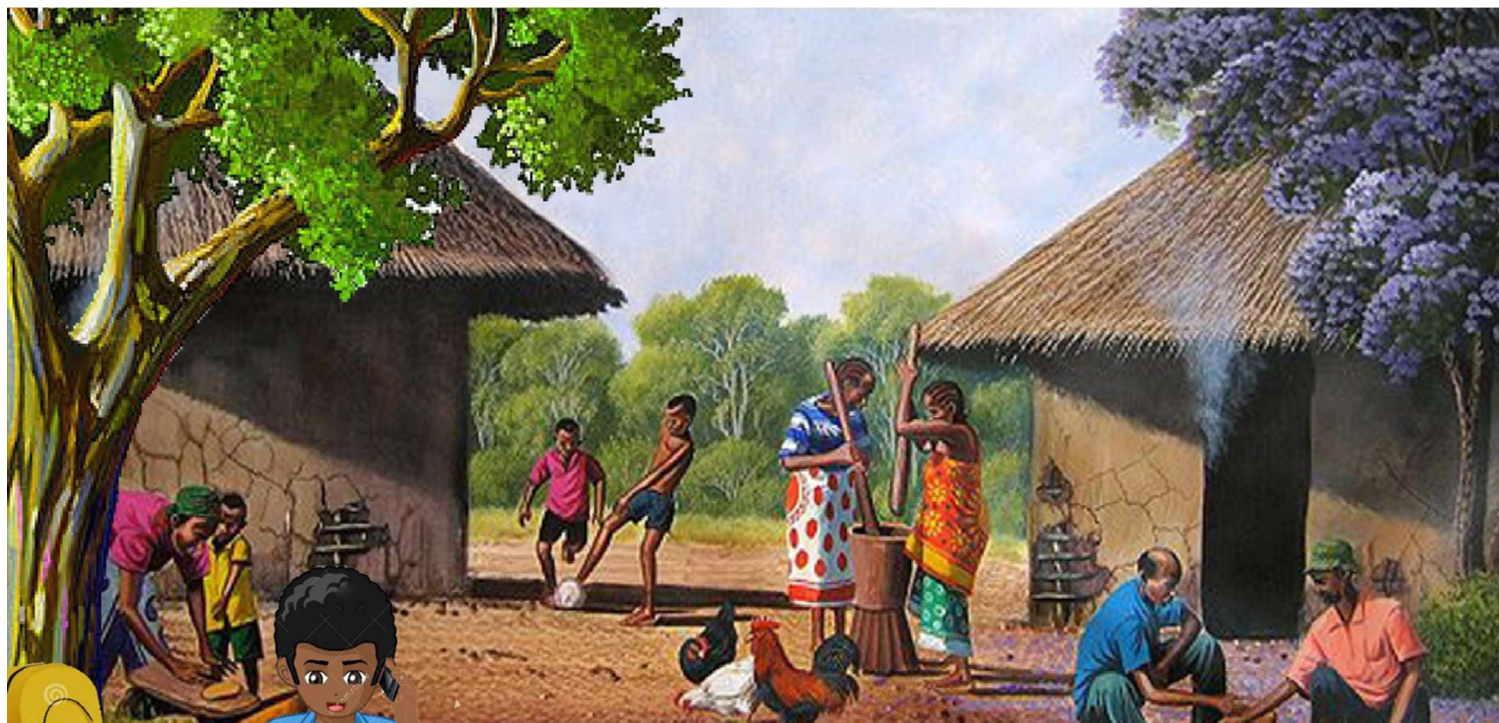
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