

# Advantage Africa

## Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults

### 1. Rights and Responsibilities

Advantage Africa believes that the welfare and rights of all children<sup>1</sup> and vulnerable adults<sup>2</sup> should be paramount in all its policies, planning, procedures, and practices. To safeguard their welfare, our staff volunteers (including Trustees) and representatives<sup>3</sup> will be fully aware of and actively promote their rights. Without exception, all children and vulnerable adults have the right to:

- Be safe from harm and abuse
- Have their health, safety, well-being and best interests considered paramount.
- Be valued, respected and understood within the context of their culture.
- Have their views given careful consideration
- Participate in decisions which affect them.
- Welfare, development and opportunities to reach their full potential.

The implementation of this policy will help promote the fulfillment of these rights.

While all staff and volunteers (including Trustees) are responsible for implementing the policy, the Lead Person is Advantage Africa's Director Andrew Betts and the Deputy is Brenda Bignold.

### 2. Code of Conduct

To fulfill the rights outlined above, when Advantage Africa staff, representatives and volunteers (including Trustees) are in contact with children and vulnerable adults they should:

- Treat them with respect and a positive attitude.
- Recognise them as individuals in their own right, with special individual needs.
- Work with them in a spirit of cooperation, respect and mutual trust.
- Value and take seriously their views and opinions.
- Help to develop their inherent potential, capacities and capabilities.
- Strive to understand the context in which they live.
- Involve them in decision-making whenever possible.
- *Never, under any circumstances*, engage in actions or behaviour that could be construed as abusive, or condone such actions or behaviour.

Any breach of this code will immediately invoke Advantage Africa's disciplinary procedure.

### 3. Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults

- All Advantage Africa staff and volunteers (including Trustees) will have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check at the appropriate level (usually standard) initiated at the point of starting work with Advantage Africa and renewed to remain current. Employment contracts will be issued subject to these checks.
- All Advantage Africa's staff and volunteers (including Trustees) will read Advantage Africa's Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults and sign that they have understood and will adhere to its contents including the Code of Conduct and Response Procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (signed by all countries except the USA and Somalia) states that a child is under 18.

<sup>2</sup> 'Vulnerable Adult' includes people with disability, special learning needs, illness or incapacity due to poverty and age.

<sup>3</sup> Representative" means any person presenting themselves to a child or vulnerable adult because of their relationship with Advantage Africa, whether formally contracted and paid or not. This includes staff, volunteers, trustees, partners, consultants, donors and supporters. It should be recognised that while the strength of relationship with and representation of Advantage Africa of such parties varies widely, this is not always understood by hosts and is an important factor in protecting reputational risk to Advantage Africa

- All staff will be trained in the protection of children and vulnerable adults to ensure they understand the four definitions of abuse and can initiate the Response Procedure.
- Staff and volunteers (including Trustees) and representatives should wherever possible avoid sole contact with children and/or vulnerable adults.
- Advantage Africa will support its partners in putting in place suitable child and vulnerable adult protection policies and provide them with training in implementing and monitoring these policies. The protection of children and vulnerable adults will be an integral element of all Partnership Agreements and quarterly reports.
- If a partner organisation fails to respond positively and implement the above measures over time, the partnership will be reconsidered and may result in termination.
- Protect the identity and privacy of children by obtaining their verbal consent to use photographs and changing their names in fundraising and educational materials.
- The implementation of this policy will be monitored, item by item, against Advantage Africa's Risk Register which is reviewed quarterly by the Trustees.
- The policy will be available on Advantage Africa's website and freely provided on request, for example to donors and operational partners.
- The policy will be reviewed by staff and Trustees annually.

#### 4. Definitions of Abuse

Advantage Africa acknowledges the following four categories of abuse:

**Physical Abuse:** Causing significant harm to a child or vulnerable adult, either directly or indirectly (e.g. by causing illness). Possible indicators include:

- Obvious signs of injury;
- Injuries which are unusual or unexplained;
- Injuries, which while explained are frequent;
- Unexplained changes in behaviour, including aggressive or confrontational behaviour.

**Emotional abuse:** Actions which have a severe negative impact on a child's emotional development, and are persistent. These may include bullying or mocking a child. Possible indicators include:

- Difficulty in making friends;
- Non-comprehension of boundaries of acceptable behaviour;
- Unable to play in an age appropriate way.

**Sexual abuse:** Any form of sexual contact between an adult and a child or vulnerable adult, regardless of whether the child knows what is happening or consents. Possible indicators include:

- Physical difficulties such as wetting or soiling;
- Extreme variations in behaviour;
- Sexualised language, behaviour or play;
- Indirect disclosure through play, drawing or written work.

**Neglect:** Willful failure to provide for a child's needs (eg lack of food/clothing/shelter, failure to protect from harm, not providing medical treatment) where the means to do so exist. Possible indicators include:

- Lack of appropriate clothing;
- Poor hygiene;
- Persistent hunger or signs of malnutrition;
- Unexplained or frequent illness.

## 5. Response Procedure

Should you be concerned that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused, for example because they tell you (in which case their welfare overrides any obligation of confidence to them), you observe one of the indicators above or someone raises concerns with you - the following procedure *must be followed, without exception*.

- If possible, carefully observe the child or vulnerable adult.
- Immediately record the information factually, and non-judgmentally.
- Confidentially communicate your concerns without delay or further investigation to the Lead Person (or the Deputy if they are not available or the concern actually relates to the Lead).
- (In the UK) Ensure the Lead refers the concern to Social Care Services, and if you suspect a crime has been committed, the police, as soon as possible. The NSPCC may also be contacted should external advice or guidance be required.
- (Overseas) Work with the local partner organisation to ensure the procedure in their policy is followed and appropriate local authorities are informed.
- In case of allegation against a person with a duty of care, ensure the Local Authority Designated Officer co-ordinates the next steps.
- Follow up the referral in writing within 24 hours.
- Work with the Lead to ensure everything is recorded with times, dates and signatures against each action in a securely stored logbook, in line with standard data protection procedures.

## 6. Adoption and Review

This policy was adopted by the Advantage Africa Board of Trustees on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2006 and last reviewed on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015. The policy will be reviewed annually and its implementation monitored quarterly through Advantage Africa's Risk Register.