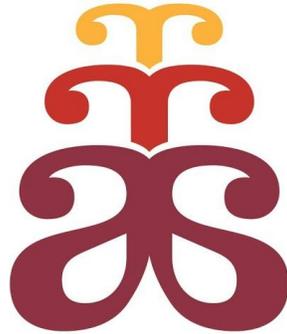


Aspyre Africa Child Protection Policy



ASPYRE AFRICA

Child Protection Policy

Updated 30.01.16

(Based on CREATE Child Protection Policy & Procedures, www.createsolutions.org)

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Aspyre Africa Vision, Mission & Objectives

Vision: A world where every vulnerable young person has equal opportunities to succeed professionally and contribute meaningfully to society.

Mission: To provide vulnerable young people with access to sustainable livelihoods through targeted vocational training and leisure activities contributing to their wellbeing and personal development.

Objectives:

- Provide access to vocational training, responding specifically to the needs and opportunities of the local job market
- Support youth to assess their own interests and aptitude, and select a career path that is fulfilling
- Include in each curriculum training on social and environmental responsibility
- Offer a variety of educational and leisure activities (with particular focus on music & sports)
- Facilitate access to jobs in the formal market or provide business development support (micro finance, mentoring and skills training)

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SECTION 1: IMPORTANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Definitions

Child: For the purposes of this policy, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Abuse and neglect: they “are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child either directly by inflicting harm, or indirectly, by failing to act to prevent harm. Children 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, or another child or children. There are five types of child abuse. They are defined in the UK Government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006) as follows:”¹

1. Physical abuse: may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or failing to protect a child from that harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

2. Emotional Abuse: is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age- or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

3. Sexual Abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including both penetrative or non-penetrative acts such as kissing, touching or fondling the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse or oral sex . They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

4. Neglect: is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect

¹ NSPCC 2009 6, Child protection fact sheet, Definitions and signs of child abuse

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may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing; shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

5. Bullying: may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, cause them significant harm (including self-harm). All settings in which children are provided with services or are living away from home should have in place rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies.

Child protection: A broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of organisations - and individuals associated with those organisations - towards children in their care. 'Child protection' is a term used by many organisations for the work and programmes they undertake in the community or broader social environment. This may lead to confusion when discussing the child protection responsibilities and issues involved in managing an organisation. This policy is about *organisational* child protection – i.e. building a 'child-safe organisation.'

Direct contact with children: Being in the physical presence of a child or children in the context of the organisation's work, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long term. In the UK this could involve delivering talks to schools, churches and youth groups. Overseas this could involve project / site visits and attending conferences at which children are also present. [N.B. this list of examples is not exhaustive].

Indirect contact with children: Examples include having access to information on children in the context of the organisation's work, such as children's names, locations (addresses of individuals or projects), photographs and case studies; providing funding for organisations that work 'directly' with children. Albeit indirectly, this nonetheless has an impact on children, and therefore confers upon the donor organisation responsibility for child protection issues. [N.B. this list of examples is not exhaustive].

Policy: 'A statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organisation is taking its duty and responsibility of care seriously.'²

² *Setting the Standard: A common approach to Child Protection for international NGOs*, Standard 1 (Policy).

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2. Aspyre Africa overview

Aspyre Africa is a UK based charitable organisation founded by **Savina Geerinckx** and **Veronique Cowan** in 2014 to respond to an urgent gap identified in the sector: a charity dedicated to young people (often too old to benefit from existing programmes), and able to link up beneficiaries, NGOs, training providers and businesses in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Aspyre Africa believes that complex realities require a thorough understanding of the local context and focused interventions in order to have real and long term impact. As a small charity we therefore want to focus on a single country at a time, developing our model and documenting our impact.

Aspyre Africa offers solid experience in the child rights sector, a thorough understanding of the local reality in Senegal, a wide network of trusted partners and contacts, and a direct connection to those young people in need of support.

Our values: Accountability, integrity, coordination, collaboration & sustainability

Named person responsible for child protection: Savina Geerinckx.

Second named person responsible for child protection (if main contact is unavailable):
Veronique Cowan

3. Aspyre Africa's core child safeguarding & protection principles and values

The legal basis – the UNCRC: Aspyre Africa's Child Protection Policy is firmly based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Taken holistically, the CRC provides a comprehensive framework for the protection, provision and participation of all children without discrimination to ensure their survival and development to the maximum extent possible. On the understanding that the CRC must be read as a whole, the following articles nevertheless form the specific basis of child protection: 1 (definition of 'child'), 2 (non-discrimination), 3.1 (the best interests of the child), 3.2 (duty of care and protection), 3.3 (standards of care), 6 (survival and development), 12 (participation), 13 (freedom of expression), 19 (protection from violence), 25 (periodic review of placements), 32, 33, 34, 36, 37(a) (protection from economic exploitation, substance abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, 'all other forms of exploitation'; torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment), 39 (physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration).

The moral basis – a non-negotiable duty: Aspyre Africa believes that organisations and individuals working for children's rights have an absolute duty to protect this group from abuse, mistreatment, and exploitation from within organisations intended for their benefit.

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This duty is imperative and non-negotiable. Without adequate standards and mechanisms of protection in place, an organisation is not only failing in its primary duty of care, but may also be negligently or recklessly fostering an environment of abuse. Any organisation or individual that claims to be working for the benefit of children *must* make sure that it is not putting children at risk through lack of attention to child protection policies and procedures.

An end to silence: Silence breeds abuse and exploitation of children. Child sex abusers will seek out organisations with weak communication structures and thrive where secrecy and shame prevail. Furthermore, without proper policies and explicit procedures in place, organisations and individuals are extremely vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse. Aspyre Africa therefore believes in:

- creating an environment where issues of child protection are discussed openly and are understood between children and adults;
- promoting open lines of communication both internally and externally within and between organisations and individuals to improve awareness and implementation of child protection policies and practices;
- creating a framework to deal transparently, consistently and fairly with allegations concerning abuse.

Children's participation – a space and a voice: Child protection is not only about policies on paper. The best way to protect children is to empower them to protect themselves. Creating a space where children feel able and willing to speak out about abuse, free from abusers, empowers them to become actors in their own protection without further discrimination or shame. Aspyre Africa believes that helping children to find a voice is an essential step to helping them to claim their individual rights. Children will only benefit from this policy if they are aware of their rights and are given the proper environment in which to exercise them.

Taking it further: Child protection is not just about reading and signing a piece of paper: the policy sets out guidelines and standards that must be put into practice. These include, amongst other measures: recruitment procedures, review of management structures, creation of a space for children to speak out, staff training, and development of transparent protocols. 'Above all, it must be remembered that it is the children, not the standards, that are sacrosanct; and although abuse must never be tolerated, the standards are no more than a tool in the service of promoting the welfare of children.'³

Capacity building: Aspyre Africa understands the need for capacity building on issues of child protection and appreciates the constraints and conditions under which organisations operate. Aspyre Africa is committed to undertake such capacity building in partnership with others.

Challenging complacency: Resistance to addressing child protection issues may come from lack of understanding of the nature of child abuse, lack of commitment to the organisation / programme, and a sense that child abuse happens elsewhere. Organisations should ask themselves: "If safety and well being of children are not at the centre of the organisation's

³ *Setting the Standard: A common approach to Child Protection for international NGOs*, anonymous INGO quotation, p.6.

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programme / activities, then why not?" 'It is unfortunate and unacceptable that it will take a horrendous incident to shock some organisations into action'. Aspyre Africa will challenge complacency as a matter of course.⁴

These principles underlie all of the following standards set out in this document.

4. What is a Child Protection Policy?

A Child Protection Policy provides a framework of principles, standards and guidelines on which to base individual and organisational practice in relation to areas such as:

- Creating a 'child safe' and 'child friendly' organisation (in relation to environmental safety as well as protection against physical, psychological and sexual abuse)
- Prevention of abuse
- Personnel recruitment
- Education and training
- Management structure
- Guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour/attitude of adults towards children and of children towards each other
- Guidelines for communications regarding children
- Recognising, reporting and reacting to suspected and alleged abuse
- Ramifications of misconduct in relation to the policy and procedures

This policy is not solely directed towards sexual abuse, but rather encompasses all aspects of child protection including, but not limited to: proper recruitment, training and managerial procedures, health and safety measures, physical harm, disciplinary measures in relation to children, working with information about children, and the ramifications of misconduct.

5. What a Child Protection Policy is not:

Signing this policy does not absolve Aspyre Africa from further action. It is the beginning, not the end of child protection. This policy is not exclusive to staff working directly with children on a regular basis; it applies to every individual and organisation affiliated with Aspyre Africa in any way: Many organisations – especially those that do not work directly with children – do not believe the standards are relevant to them because of many factors. Aspyre Africa disagrees with this and upholds that every organisation (whether they work directly or indirectly with children, whether they are funding or being funded) must take responsibility for child protection.

6. Why do we need a Child Protection Policy?

'Any international NGO should have a child protection policy if its direct or indirect beneficiaries include individuals under the age of 18'

⁴ Adapted, with selected quotations, from ECPAT Australia, *Choose with Care*, p.34.

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- As an organisation working for the rights of children, it is our duty to ensure that our promotion of children's rights includes specifically protecting children from accidental harm as well as deliberate abuse within organisations - and by individuals - intended for their benefit. This policy will assist in fulfilling this duty.
- The children with whom we work are especially vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and ill treatment at the hands of carers, other project workers, and those with access to their personal information. In the case of children who have run away from home, many have already experienced ruptured relationships of trust or abuse of an adult-child relationship in the form of physical, psychological or sexual abuse.
- Organisations working with vulnerable children have been, are and will continue to be vulnerable to harbouring abuse until the issues are brought into the open.
- Organisations without protection policies, guidelines and systems are more vulnerable to false or malicious accusations of abuse.
- Without proper policies, guidelines and procedures in place, allegations of abuse, whether founded or unfounded, can destroy an organisation's reputation. This will have serious implications for Aspyre Africa's ability to function (thus undermining our entire portfolio of work, even beyond the scope of the particular project concerned) as well as damaging the reputation of the child rights sector as a whole.

7. Who is bound by the Policy?

a) Aspyre Africa staff and trustees

Aspyre Africa staff & trustees are bound to the commitment not only to abide by, but also to understand and promote the policies, guidelines, principles and practice of child protection in a child rights context. It is crucial that the Aspyre Africa staff and trustees uphold the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour while associated with Aspyre Africa, including in their personal lives, because their actions reflect the principles of the organisation. This document outlines the recruitment procedures for new staff and trustees (see Section 2.1). The format of management structure is outlined in Section 2.3. Direct lines of communication throughout the staff and trustees must be implemented and a specific person assigned to be in charge of child protection issues.

Each staff member or trustee will be:

- Required to obtain an enhanced DBS check;
- Expected to sign the appropriate Statement of Commitment to Aspyre Africa's Child Protection Policy as a condition of association with Aspyre Africa (see Section 3 (A));
- Expected to sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent', and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues;
- Expected to attend all child protection training provided by the organisation;
- New staff members will be expected to provide 2 contacts for referees that can be verified by telephone (excluding family members and those who have known the applicant personally for less than 2 years).

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b) Staff and trustees of partner organisations

Aspyre Africa commits to raising awareness of child protection issues with its partners. Complying with Aspyre Africa's Child Protection Policy is therefore a condition in every partnership agreement.

In addition, Aspyre Africa will incorporate child protection discussions into the development of all projects undertaken with external organisations. If, in any joint proposal, Aspyre Africa has overall responsibility for delivery of a project, then Aspyre Africa will insist on all partners complying with Aspyre Africa's Child Protection Policy. This must be sensitively negotiated during the project development stage and support and advice must be given to partners throughout the project to assist them in complying with these standards.

In any project where responsibility is held jointly / equally between the project partners:

- Aspyre Africa's own personnel (staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers) are bound by this policy;
- In addition, Aspyre Africa will ensure – to the best of its ability and in the given circumstances - that child protection concerns are addressed and monitored throughout the project overall;
- Aspyre Africa will proactively offer advice and assistance on child protection issues to other project partners, and will encourage them to develop their own child protection policies if they do not have something already in place.
- However, Aspyre Africa will not be responsible for the personnel of project partners in terms of child protection issues.

c) Interns and Volunteers

Aspyre Africa interns and volunteers are bound to the commitment not only to abide by, but also to promote the policies, guidelines, principles and practice of children's protection in a child rights context. It is crucial that the interns and volunteers of Aspyre Africa uphold the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour whilst associated with Aspyre Africa, including in their personal lives, because the actions of the interns and volunteers ought to reflect the principles of the organisation.

Because interns and volunteers are often employed temporarily, managers of interns and volunteers must stress the importance of child protection issues during initial induction training, and assess the actions of these workers, as part of the organisation's general management and monitoring procedures, to ensure the policy provisions are understood and followed correctly.

A copy of Aspyre Africa's Child Protection Policy will be included in Aspyre Africa's Intern Induction Pack which will be presented to every intern and volunteer. Each intern and volunteer will be:

- Required to obtain a standard or enhanced DBS check if advised based on the job description;

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- Expected to sign the appropriate Statement of Commitment to Aspyre Africa's Child Safeguarding & Protection Policy as a condition of working with Aspyre Africa (see Section 3 (A));
- Expected to sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent', and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues;
- Expected to provide 2 contacts for referees that can be verified by telephone (excluding family members and those who have known the applicant personally for less than 2 years).

d) Consultants

Each individual and organisation working in the name of Aspyre Africa, is held accountable for good practice while working either 'directly' or 'indirectly' with children (see 'definitions', Section 1.1). Each will be informed of the policy, and asked to sign a 'Statement of Commitment' to the principles contained in the policy.

If the type of work carried out involves **direct contact** with children, the following standards shall apply:

Each consultant will be:

- Expected to sign the appropriate Statement of Commitment to Aspyre Africa's Child Protection Policy as a condition of the contract (see Section III (A));
- Required to obtain an enhanced DBS check;
- Expected to sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent', and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues;
- Expected to provide 2 contacts for referees that can be verified by telephone (excluding family members and those who have known the applicant personally for less than 2 years).

If the type of work carried out involves **indirect contact** with children and/or information regarding children, the following standards shall apply:

Each consultant will be:

- Expected to sign the appropriate Statement of Commitment to Aspyre Africa's Child Safeguarding & Protection Policy as a condition of the contract (see Section III (A));
- Expected to sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent', and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues;
- Expected to provide 2 contacts for referees that can be verified by telephone (excluding family members and those who have known the applicant personally for less than 2 years).

Individuals and organisations who work for Aspyre Africa more than once in any one year period are covered by their original Child Protection Policy commitments. Individuals or

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organisations who carry out work for Aspyre Africa again after one year will be required to recommit to our Child Protection Policy, conforming again with the requirements set out above.

If the type of work carried out involves **no contact** with children, and no access to information regarding children, (e.g. accountant, auditor), then no formal procedure is necessary.

e) Responsibility for children brought from overseas to the UK, or children brought together within the UK

In general children's participation is best developed by working with children within their own environments and in the context of their own social support structures. Children's participation should be integrated into programming on an on-going basis as much as possible rather than being confined to participation in one-off events and consultations, especially those that take place outside the child's local context. With this in mind, any decision to invite children to attend events in the UK must be taken in the best interests of the child with serious consideration given to the objectives and implications.

If Aspyre Africa undertakes any initiative (whether in a funding or facilitating role) to bring children from overseas to the UK, or together within the UK, for any purpose (e.g. attending conferences, exchange visits, consultations), both Aspyre Africa as a whole, as well as the individuals entrusted with the direct care of the children are responsible for ensuring compliance with all relevant aspects of this policy. The child / children will be accompanied by a designated chaperone at all times.

The individuals entrusted with the direct care of the children must satisfy the procedures listed above in Section 1.7.b including signing the relevant Statement of Commitment to Aspyre Africa's policy, undergoing standard DBS disclosure (if geographic jurisdiction applies), providing a personal declaration of criminal convictions and 2 contacts for referees that can be verified by telephone; receive a specific briefing - in relation to the exact circumstances of the project - from the organisation's designated child protection person / Officer; this briefing should include refresher training on the organisation's Code of Behaviour, and ample opportunity for clarifying child protection principles and procedures; be provided with contact details for 24 hour emergency support within the organisation for the duration of the child / children's visit, as well as external emergency contact details (e.g. medical).

Individuals within the organisation who are likely to come into contact with such children in the context of visits from overseas should, in addition to complying with the general policy requirements, receive refresher training on the organisation's Code of Behaviour.

Representatives of the organisation shall disseminate and promote copies of the Code of Behaviour in all situations where the organisation is responsible for bringing children in contact with adults.

f) Individuals on project visits (e.g. donors, journalists, and researchers)

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Anyone travelling overseas either as a representative of Aspyre Africa, or where Aspyre Africa is responsible for that person, e.g. donors, journalists and researchers, and who will have direct or indirect contact with children during the project visit, will be:

- required to obtain a standard DBS check;
- expected to sign the appropriate Statement of Commitment to the project visit version of Aspyre Africa's Child Safeguarding & Protection Policy as a condition of the visit (see Section 3 (B));
- expected to sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent', and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues;
- expected to provide 2 contacts for referees that can be verified by telephone (excluding family members and those who have known the applicant personally for less than 2 years);
- expected to receive a specific briefing - in relation to the exact circumstances of the visit - from the organisation's designated Child Protection Officer; this briefing should include training on Aspyre Africa's Code of Behaviour and Aspyre Africa's Communication Guidelines (including use of images); in the case of journalists, they will also be issued a copy of any additional media guidelines that may be produced in the future.

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SECTION 2: ASPYRE AFRICA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & GUIDELINES

Updating the policy: This document will be updated a minimum of once every year or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation, to guarantee the best available policies for child protection.

Our vision is to build a “child safe organisation”. We will work towards this by developing and implementing policies and procedures, to the best of our ability, to ensure the respect and wellbeing of children who come into contact with Aspyre Africa. The implementation of this policy and the guidelines outlined below should be based on a spirit of positive commitment at all times to the best interests of the child.

1. Personnel Recruitment Procedure

Aspyre Africa staff and trustees will:

- Read, understand and accept compliance with Aspyre Africa’s Child Protection Policy and guidelines as part of the terms and conditions of association with Aspyre Africa. This process will include signing the appropriate Statement of Commitment as a condition of association (see Section 3 (A)).
- Obtain a standard or enhanced disclosure (depending on level of contact with children) through the Disclosure and Barring Service (if geographical jurisdiction of the DBS applies).
- Sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered ‘spent’, and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues.
- Be expected to provide 2 contacts for referees that can be verified by telephone (excluding family members and those who have known the applicant personally for less than 2 years).

If Aspyre Africa recruits any additional staff, consultants, interns or volunteers, whether paid or unpaid, full time or part time, temporary or long-term, having direct or indirect contact with children, there will be a thorough and standardised recruitment process, which shall include:

- Advertisements for vacancies that clearly state that a child protection policy, including screening procedures, is in place.
- A candidate specification that accompanies each job description, against which applicants are judged, to ensure that the best candidate for the job is selected, above and beyond child protection considerations.
- The requirement for the potential associate to read, understand and accept compliance with Aspyre Africa’s Child Protection Policy and guidelines as part of the terms and conditions of association with Aspyre Africa. This process will include signing the appropriate Statement of Commitment as a condition of association (see Section 3 (A)).
- A standard or enhanced disclosure (depending on level of contact with children) through the Disclosure and Barring Services (if geographical jurisdiction of the DBS applies).

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- The requirement for the potential associate to sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent', and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues.
- The required minimum of two character references (excluding family members and those who have known the applicant personally for less than 2 years) that can be verified by telephone. "If [the] two referees are being used as an alternate arrangement to police checking [i.e. if geographical jurisdiction of the DBS does not apply] then the existence of the referee must be confirmed [...] and the reference must be taken up."
- An interview process which includes:
 - One member of the recruitment panel will have undergone recruitment training specifically focussed on the issues of child protection. See Child Protection Policies and Procedures Toolkit Appendix 9 – Guidelines on Recruitment www.childhope.org.uk/toolkit.php for sample interview questions.
 - Specific, standardised questions at interview on child protection and the candidate's commitment to, and respect for, child protection policies and procedures as well as the candidate's motivation for working with children.
 - Attentiveness to anything suspicious in employment history (including gaps), and the use of telephone references to clarify any areas of concern.

2. Education and Training

Aspyre Africa's directors will foster an environment that encourages opportunities to question and learn about child protection issues. There will be opportunities within Aspyre Africa to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding to safeguard children. The opportunities shall include:

An induction process for all staff, consultants, interns and volunteers which includes: familiarisation with the Child Protection Policy and procedures; opportunities to learn about the nature of abuse, the effects of abuse and how to recognise and respond to concerns about child abuse; information and support on who to contact in the event of any concerns about child protection issues.

New staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers should receive child protection training as soon as possible (ideally within 3 months) of taking up their position.

Existing staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers should receive child protection training within a designated time period (ideally within 3 months) of the Child Protection Policy coming into force.

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Staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers who will have direct contact with children either in the UK (e.g. through school or youth group contact) or overseas (e.g. through project visits) must be fully trained on the organisation's behaviour protocols and guidelines and must be clear on who to contact in the event of any concerns.

In a situation where Aspyre Africa directors are on a long-term assignment, which involves building relationships with children, orientation will be given to children themselves on all relevant aspects of the Aspyre Africa's Child Protection Policy and procedures.

Staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers who have access to information about children such as personal contact information, including their address, specific cases or incidents, or any other details of a child's personal life must be trained to fully understand what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable sharing of information regarding children.

It is recognised that this training and the topic of child abuse are of a sensitive nature and may raise personal issues. It is not our wish to upset anyone and so Aspyre Africa will develop guidelines on how to cope with a training participant who becomes emotionally distraught. Amongst other things, this will include giving out referral telephone numbers for agencies with experience supporting survivors of child abuse.

A regular re-evaluation of circumstances regarding training and policy procedures will be administered, assuring an up-to-date awareness of child protection issues within Aspyre Africa.

3. Management Structure

There will be a specific management process adopted in order to facilitate implementation of the child protection policy and procedures. The structure shall include:

Aspyre Africa will have open lines of communication where understanding abuse and listening and responding to concerns are the main priority. It will create an atmosphere of support and encouragement for those who feel it necessary to report concerns, as child protection is a difficult issue to confront. It will promote a positive environment for giving and receiving feedback.

Aspyre Africa staff and trustees will reflect Aspyre Africa's core principles and values, upholding a professional approach toward child protection issues and demonstrating awareness of matters of abuse.

All Aspyre Africa staff and trustees will implement child protection. However, a person who is responsible for the implementation of the child protection policy will be designated. This role will reflect the nature and structure of the organisation and the person shall have sufficient seniority and support to carry out the role.

The responsibilities of the designated Aspyre Africa child protection person will include:

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- Promoting awareness and implementation of the policy throughout the organisation.
- Monitoring implementation of the policy and reporting on developments at each Aspyre Africa meeting.
- The development of child protection training resources as required.
- Maintaining knowledge of best practice and statutory requirements.

In a context of positive, overall organisational support for child protection, on-going supervision, monitoring and support of individuals working directly with children, or with direct access to information on children will be provided by Aspyre Africa's designated Child Protection Officer and integrated into Aspyre Africa's regular meetings.

In addition to child protection being a standing agenda item at meetings, annual reviews and self-assessments, these will include an opportunity to discuss child protection issues with other members of the Board.

The disclosure of personal information about children, including legal cases, should be limited to those staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers who need to know.

Aspyre Africa commits to raising awareness of child protection issues with its partners. Aspyre Africa will therefore incorporate child protection discussions into all projects undertaken.

4. Behaviour Protocols

There is a Code of Conduct to protect any child from abuse. The Code of Conduct includes guidance on appropriate / expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children. Where Aspyre Africa comes into contact with children as part of its work, it will explain that it has a Child Protection Policy, which guides its work with children and organisations working with children. When Aspyre Africa becomes involved in sustained work directly with children, then Aspyre Africa will work with the children themselves to develop a peer Code of Behaviour which outlines appropriate / expected standards of behaviour of children towards other children.

The Code will be prominently displayed on Aspyre Africa 's website and therefore easily accessible.

Representatives of the organisation shall disseminate and promote copies of the Code of Conduct in all situations where the organisation is responsible for bringing children into contact with adults.

ASPYRE AFRICA Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense, with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration.

Aspyre Africa Child Protection Policy

Aspyre Africa staff must make an attempt to understand the local norms around physical contact between children and adults.

Minimising risk situations:

Try to: avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position; be accompanied by a second adult whenever possible; meet with a child in a central, public location whenever possible; immediately note, in a designated organisational Child Protection Log Book or incident report sheet, the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation; keep in mind that actions, no matter how well intended, are always subject to misinterpretation by a third party.

Try not to be alone with a single child, including in the following situations: in a car (no matter how short the journey); overnight (no matter where the accommodation); in your home or the home of a child. Do not show favouritism or spend excessive amounts of time with one child.

Sexual behaviour:

Do not: engage in or allow sexually provocative games with children to take place; kiss, hug, fondle, rub, or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way; sleep in the same bed as a child; do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing, and grooming; encourage any crushes by a child.

Physical behaviour:

Do: wait for appropriate physical contact, such as holding hands, to be initiated by the child, except in situations where it is expected for adults to greet children by offering them their hand.

Psychosocial behaviour:

Do: Be aware of the power balance between an adult and child, and avoid taking any advantage this may provide; be aware that your presence with children will often be temporary and you should therefore avoid creating bonds with children which encourage emotional or psychological dependency: make it clear to children from the outset, in age-appropriate terms, that you will not be with them long-term.

Do not: use language that will mentally or emotionally harm any child; suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind; act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate, or degrade a child; encourage any inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour, such as tantrums, by a child; show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion.

Peer abuse:

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Do: be aware of the potential for peer abuse; develop special measures / supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children; avoid placing children in high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children).

Do not: allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.

Physical environment:

Do: develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (e.g. for projects based near water, heavy road traffic, railway lines).

5. Communication Guidelines

Access to printed and electronic personal information about children should be restricted to the minimum number of people who need to know within Aspyre Africa. Personal and physical information that could be used to identify the location of a child within a country and cause them to be put at risk should not be used on the organisation's website or in any other form of communication for general or public purposes.

Every child has a right to be accurately represented through both words and images. The organisation's portrayal of each child must not be manipulated or sensationalized in any way. Children must be presented as human beings with their own identity and dignity preserved. Text and images included in any print, broadcast or electronic materials such as brochures, publications, reports, videos or websites should depict an accurate and balanced depiction of children and their circumstances. Sufficient information should be provided where possible as to their social, cultural and economic environment. Where children are indeed 'victims', the preservation of the child's dignity must nevertheless be preserved at all times. In these circumstances, 'before' and 'after' pictures are useful to depict a balance between victimisation and empowerment.

As far as possible, people [including children] should be able to give their own accounts rather than have people speak on their behalf, and people's [including children's] ability to take responsibility and action for themselves should be highlighted.

Avoid: Language and images that could possibly degrade, victimise or shame children;
Making generalisations which do not accurately reflect the nature of the situation;
Discrimination of any kind; Taking pictures out of context (e.g. pictures should be accompanied by an explanatory caption where possible).

In images, children should be appropriately clothed and not depicted in any poses that could be interpreted as sexually provocative.

Always ask permission from the child / children themselves before taking photographs or moving images except under exceptional circumstances, based on the child / children's best interests, where this might not be possible or desirable.

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To the greatest extent possible, the organisation should acquire informed consent / the permission of the child, child's guardian and/or NGO responsible for the child in order to use the image for publicity, fundraising, awareness-raising or other purpose (which should be made clear to the consent-giver).

Individuals or organisations requesting the use of Aspyre Africa's resources such as photographs should be required to sign an agreement with Aspyre Africa as to the proper use of such materials. The agreement could include a statement that any use of such materials for purposes other than what is agreed upon could subject the borrowing individual or organisation to legal action. Furthermore, failure to adhere to the agreed use of the material will result in the immediate termination of the organisation's permission to use the subject materials and/or require immediate return of all materials (including any copies made) provided by Aspyre Africa.

6. Reporting and reaction protocol

There is a process for reporting and reacting to witnessed, suspected or alleged child abuse and/or violation of the Child Protection Policy which is made available to, and understood by, all staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers. If Aspyre Africa is working on a project, which involves sustained, direct contact with children, then the children themselves should be made aware, in a language and age-appropriate way that they understand, what to do if they feel uncomfortable and want to report something. The process includes:

The guiding principle that the best interests of the child, the need to ensure the immediate physical and psychological safety of the child, and the desire to secure the best outcomes for the child should always govern decisions regarding what action should be taken in response to concerns. Child abuse disempowers children. Aspyre Africa aims to empower children by allowing them to govern as much as possible, decisions regarding action that is taken in light of concerns or allegations.

Guidance on dealing with allegations from a child that ensure that the child is treated with respect:

Allegations from a child

When a child informs you that he/she is uncomfortable or concerned with a specific person's (adult or child) behaviour towards them or another child, the following steps must be taken: Reassure them that they were right to report the behaviour.

- o Listen carefully and calmly to them and ask questions to clarify the allegation so that you will be able to later report the incident correctly.
- o During the conversation, try not to repeat the same questions to the child, as this gives the child the impression that they did not give correct information the first time and they are not fully believed.
- o Do not promise secrecy to the child. Inform the child that you must report the incident or inappropriate behaviour as it is in their best interest.

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- o Take proper steps to ensure the physical safety and psychological well being of the child. This may include referring them for medical treatment or to a psychologist.
- o Make certain you distinguish between what the child has actually said and the inferences you may have made. Accuracy is paramount in this stage of the procedure.
- o Do not permit personal doubt to prevent you from reporting the allegation to the proper supervisor.
- o Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

Guidance on confidentiality and information sharing, which clarifies that the protection of the child is the most important consideration:

This includes a standardised system for reporting incidents, concerns and referrals and storing these securely. Records should be signed and dated. Records must be kept securely in a locked place to which access is restricted. Aspyre Africa has a particular responsibility in maintaining the confidentiality of these records and must ensure that the records, or any information they contain, are made available only to relevant parties. The transfer of information – verbally, through the mail, electronically, etc. – should be done in such a way that confidentiality is maintained.

Aspyre Africa must take appropriate steps within its power to protect the child / children in question from further harm. If your concerns involve immediate harm to a child, action must be taken without delay, as inaction may place the child in further danger. If you know any information about the maltreatment of a child, it is your responsibility to tell someone. All staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers must therefore act immediately and report suspicions, however uncertain, to the designated person (or alternate designated person) in accordance with the organisation's reporting procedure (refer to flowchart and response form). The designated person may in turn seek guidance on further action in the local context (if overseas) or from local social services and the police (if in the UK).

In certain instances there will be the obligation for Aspyre Africa and its staff, trustees, consultants and others to report concerns to the appropriate external bodies. This will usually occur as a consequence of the reporting procedure. However, if urgent action is required in order to protect children then it may be prior to the reporting procedure.

Relevant contact details for child protection services, local social services department, police, emergency medical help and helplines (e.g. NSPCC) will be readily available and easily accessible to organisation representatives.

Arrangements will be made for providing supervision and support to consultants, interns and/or volunteers during and following an incident or allegation.

Action in the UK: The responsibility for investigating allegations of child abuse in the UK (and many other countries) rests with the Police and local Social Service Department. The organisation's designated child protection officer will usually seek the advice of the Social Services, Police or NSPCC in deciding whether a formal referral to Social Services is necessary. Police and Social Services procedures will then be followed. If it is decided that external

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reporting should not take place then there must be a clear rationale for that decision which should be recorded. The decision not to report in such circumstances should be unanimously approved by all Aspyre Africa trustees.

Action overseas: If the incident takes place whilst a Aspyre Africa associate is on an overseas visit, then Aspyre Africa is obliged to raise the issue with the local partner in order to: ensure that the local partner is aware of the concerns raised; seek further clarification of the local organisation's Child Protection Policies and procedures; suggest or offer support in helping them to develop appropriate policies and procedures where appropriate.

See ChildHope Child Protection Toolkit, Appendix 13 p.152, at www.childhope.org.uk/toolkit.php or www.createsolutions.org for the **reporting form**.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

- Concerned about suspected, witnessed, reported or potential child abuse in either the UK (i.e. during a school or youth group talk), or overseas (i.e. during a project visit)?
- Discuss your concerns with the designated person/main contact in your organisation (preferably on same working day). You may contact any or all of the following. If your concerns involve this specific person(s), you may contact the other contact person in confidence.

Name: Savina Geerinckx , **Title:** Director, **Location:** London, UK, **Contact details:** savina@aspyreafrica.org , Mobile: +44 (0)7919 562 336

Name: Veronique Cowan, **Title:** Director, **Location:** Horsham, UK, **Contact details:** Veronique@aspyreafrica.org , Mobile: +44 (0)7944 588597

The person contacted must then inform the trustees of the concerns to discuss further action (preferably on same working day)

Action will be taken:

- If in the **UK**, additional referral contacts could be made *as appropriate*. [See additional text below for further clarification].
 - NSCPCC
 - Social Services Child Protection Team
 - Local Police
- If **overseas**, additional referral contacts could be made *as appropriate*. [See additional text below for further clarification].
 - Host Project Manager
 - Refer to the Host's Child Protection Policy.
 - (Local Police)

7. Ramifications of Misconduct

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If an allegation of a violation of the policies, guidelines, principles or practice of child protection is made concerning a named individual from a verifiable source against any staff, trustee, consultant, intern or volunteer, they may be suspended from all activity / association with Aspyre Africa pending the outcome of an independent investigation.

Depending on the outcome of the independent investigation: If it comes to light that anyone associated with Aspyre Africa commits acts in relation to children – whether within or outside the context of Aspyre Africa’s work – which are criminal, grossly infringe children’s rights, or contravene the principles and standards contained in this document, the organisation will take immediate disciplinary action and any other action which may be appropriate to the circumstances. This may mean, for example, for:

- Staff – disciplinary action / dismissal from association with Aspyre Africa
- Volunteers and interns – ending the relationship with Aspyre Africa

Depending on the nature, circumstances and location of the case, Aspyre Africa will also consider involving authorities such as the police to ensure the protection of children and criminal prosecution where this is appropriate.

The decision to suspend is not subject to challenge. When investigating and determining the concerns or complaints, the process should always be fair and any adverse determination should be open to challenge through an appeals process. This means that if a staff member, consultant, intern or volunteer has been accused of violating the Child Protection Policy and the complaint has been upheld as a result of an investigation, the accused has the right to appeal this decision (for example, they may feel that the original decision was unjust or based on misinformation or a personal grudge of the person who carried out the investigation). An appeal would mean that a second party would re-examine the evidence to double-check that no mistakes have been made. The decision from the appeals process would then be final once and for all.

Aspyre Africa Child Protection Policy

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

to Aspyre Africa's Child Protection Policy

VERSION A: ASPYRE AFRICA – staff, trustees, consultants, interns and volunteers

"I, _____ [name] _____, have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Protection Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing child protection policies and practice while working with Aspyre Africa.

_____ (Print name)

_____ (Job title / role)

_____ (Signature)

(Date)

Aspyre Africa Child Protection Policy

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

to Aspyre Africa's Child Safeguarding & Protection Policy

VERSION B: Individuals on project visits (e.g. donors, journalists, and researchers)

"I, _____ [name] _____, have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Protection Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing child protection policies and practice while associated with Aspyre Africa.

_____ (Print name)

_____ *(Job title / role)

_____ (Signature)

(Date)

* (delete as applicable)