

# Skogheim Christian Trust

## Child Protection Policy



**(Authorised July 2015)**

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**Responsibility for Policy:** Board of Directors

**Approving Authority:** The Chairperson

**Last Reviewed:** July 2015

**Next Review Date:** July 2019

## 1. Introduction

This Child Protection Policy conforms to national and international treaties that have the protection of children at heart and was developed after consulting the United Convention of the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996, and the Children's Bill, 4 August 2003.

It is based on the Christian values and principles on which Skogheim Christian Trust's vision is also based. We believe that every child and young person should be valued as a gift from God and therefore needs to be protected from any form of abuse, in order to develop as a whole person.

Skogheim Christian Trust and all ministries thereof (including Impilo neqiniso) believe that all forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children are unacceptable. We accept that steps must be taken to protect children from persons with evil intent who may seek to gain access to children and win their trust through Skogheim Christian Trust's ministry. We take seriously the possibility of employees, donors, volunteers or partners abusing children and we are committed to working to prevent this.

Child protection is a corporate and an individual responsibility. All employees and volunteers will be made aware of the need to be concerned about child protection in all that we do.

Associations with anyone found to be engaging in abusive and exploitative relationships with children will be broken.

## 2. Why is this policy necessary?

Skogheim Christian Trust works for, and with, children. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the organisation has a Child Protection Policy in place to safeguard children from any kind of abuse as far as possible and to minimize the risk of abuse where it exists.

We fully agree with the Children's Bill (2003) which states in Chapter 2 that in all matters concerning children we must protect their rights, respect their inherent dignity, treat them fairly and equitably, and protect them from discrimination.

Skogheim Christian Trust believes that every human being, including every child, is worthy of our respect, because we are all made in the image of God and because God loves human beings and wants to have a loving relationship with every one of them.

*Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Gen 1:26).*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

### **3. Aims of the policy**

The aims of Skogheim Christian Trust's Child Protection Policy are to:

- provide clear guidelines to prevent harm;
- provide clear guidelines for the appropriate actions to be taken in the event of abuse;
- ensure that this policy is accessible and can realistically be implemented.

### **4. The rights of children**

#### **4.1 The rights of a child as stated in section 28 of the Bill of Rights**

Every child has the right:

4.1.1 To a name and a nationality from birth;

4.1.2 To family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment;

4.1.3 To basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services;

4.2.4 To be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation;

4.1.5 To be protected from exploitative labour practices;

4.1.6 Not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that:

4.1.6.1 are inappropriate for a person of that child's age; or

4.1.6.2 place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development;

4.1.7 not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case, in addition to the rights a child enjoys under sections 12 and 35, the child may be detained only for the shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be:

4.1.7.1 kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18 years; and

4.1.7.2 treated in a manner, and kept in conditions, that takes account of the child's age;

4.1.8 to have a legal practitioner assigned to the child by the state, and at state expense, in civil proceedings affecting the child, if substantial injustice would otherwise result; and

4.1.9 not to be used directly in armed conflict, and to be protected in times of armed conflict.

A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.

#### **4.2 The Children's Bill, 4 August 2003**

Chapter 8, section 105 of the Act requires that any child abuse or reasonable suspicion of child abuse is reported.

The Child Protection Officer may then involve other agencies, such as social services and other child protection organisations such as Childline.

Skogheim Christian Trust will conduct internal investigations, but will co-operate with the proper authorities. This will include the Child Protection Unit of the South African Police Service.

Skogheim Christian Trust will provide the necessary support to its members and to the community.

The section entitled *Procedures* sets out the procedures to be followed in the event of abuse being reported.

The Child Protection Policy applies throughout Skogheim Christian Trust, including events on or off site, such as meetings, camps, outreaches, adventure programs and training courses.

## **5. Definitions**

Skogheim Christian Trust views a child as a human being under the age of 18 years (or 21 if still at school). Skogheim Christian Trust believes that every child is created in the image of God.

Child abuse is a general term used about situations where the child may experience harm. It means any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child, and includes assaulting a child or inflicting any other form of deliberate injury on a child; sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused; bullying by another person; or exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may psychologically or emotionally harm the child, including 'hazing' or corporal punishment.

## **6. What constitutes child abuse?**

We differentiate between different types of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual harm, sexual abuse and physical neglect.

### **6.1 Physical abuse**

This includes hurting or injuring a child, and incorporates inflicting pain, drowning, intentional drugging (drugs or alcohol) or smothering (suffocating), where there is knowledge, or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. It is serious and repeated injuries which do not result from accidents and which are inflicted by or result from the negligence of the person in whose care the child is. It is the inappropriate use of violence or physical strength leading to developmental problems.

### **6.2 Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of another person. Any child may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person(s), by design or neglect, exploits the child, directly or indirectly, in any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person(s) including organised networks. This definition holds whether or not there has been genital contact and whether or not the child is said to have initiated, or consented to the behaviour.

### **6.3 Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse occurs when the behaviour or words of a person has a negative effect on the emotional development (intelligence, memory, perception, attention, language and moral development) of the child. It is the continuous, repeated and inappropriate reaction to the child's emotional needs. There are two kinds of emotional abuse: emotional abuse and emotional negligence. The first is verbal and emotional attacks on the child, and the child is threatened and sometimes isolated. The second occurs when the child does not receive appropriate attention or when the caregiver allows inappropriate behaviour (e.g. the use of drugs) in the child.

### **6.4 Verbal abuse**

Verbal abuse includes communication by words (i.e. derogatory name calling by adults or other children, negative criticism, yelling as a form of discipline), vocal tones, racial taunts and accompanying body language and attitudes, which demean a person's worth.

### **6.5 Spiritual harm**

Spiritual harm can result when a person misuses his / her spiritual authority to negatively control, manipulate or dominate a child seemingly for Godly purposes but in fact for their own.

## **6.6 Environmental risks**

An environmental risk can occur when:

- the physical environment in which the child finds itself can be hazardous to the physical safety of the child, whether through negligence or intent; or
- control measures for access to children's venues are compromised.

## **6.7 Physical neglect**

This occurs when a child's essential physical needs are not met and this is likely to cause impairment to physical health and development. Such needs include food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth. A lack of appropriate care, including deprivation of access to health care, may result in persistent or severe exposure, through negligence, to circumstances which endanger the child. In most cases, child abuse will be the result of deliberate or avoidable behaviour. In some cases a parent or carer may not be in control of their behaviour through disabling causes (such as substance abuse or mental health problems) but child abuse may still occur. However, the cause of the abuse may be of little consequence to the abused child. It is therefore important that these exceptions to the concept of avoidability are dealt with under the ministry's child protection procedures to ensure the provision of an appropriate and considered response.

## **7. Child protection**

In the context of this policy Child Protection is used to describe the values, policies and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. It applies particularly to the duty of Skogheim Christian Trust, and the people and partners associated with Skogheim Christian Trust towards the children in their care.

### **7.1 Child protection officers**

A child protection officer is a person appointed by the leadership of Skogheim Christian Trust

- oversee and facilitate the implementation of the Child Protection Policy;
- take the necessary and prescribed steps when reports of a suspected violation of the Child Protection Policy are received.

The Skogheim Christian Trust General Manager is the designated child protection officer for Skogheim Christian Trust.

## **8. Appropriate discipline**

A child needs discipline and boundaries set in a secure (as far as possible) and loving environment. This is essential for his/her development into a person that feels secure and loved, is self-confident, self-disciplined and able to deal with the stress of life. It is not punishment.

Although discipline does involve correction (which is a form of punishment), it also involves instruction and affirmation. The goal of discipline is to help the child learn right from wrong, to respect the rights of others and to know what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Discipline should therefore involve not only the correcting of wrong or negative behaviour, but also rewarding and praising acceptable or positive behaviour.

## **9. Responsibilities of adults regarding the Child Protection Policy**

### **9.1 Adults in the physical presence of children**

When adults are in the physical presence of a child or children within the context of Skogheim Christian Trust, it is their responsibility to ensure that:

- their behaviour is appropriate at all times;
- they observe the rules established for the safety and security of children;
- they recognise the position of trust in which they have been placed; and
- the relationships they form with the children under their care are appropriate in every respect.

### **9.2 Adults in indirect contact with children**

The policy applies to those having access to information concerning children within the context of Skogheim Christian Trust's projects such as children's names, contact details, photographs and personal information.

### **9.3 Partners**

The policy also applies to Skogheim Christian Trust's partners. These include individual churches, schools, Christian ministries and other ministries or institutions that have partnered with Skogheim Christian Trust's on contract, relational or financial basis.

### **9.4 Volunteers**

The policy applies to any person who offers to help or assist with Skogheim Christian Trust's activities without remuneration. In the event of suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse all adults whether in direct or indirect contact with children and whether staff, partners or volunteers, must follow the prescribed procedures.

## **10. Recruitment and training of volunteers and employees**

10.1 All volunteers and employees (local and international) will be asked to sign and abide by the Skogheim Christian Trust's Child Protection Policy.

10.2 They will be asked to sign a declaration of criminal convictions as part of the application process.

10.3 They will be requested to give permission to Skogheim Christian Trust to do a police check at any time during their service to the ministry.

10.4 For all applicants a reliable character reference will be obtained, and particular attention will be given to any area of concern relating to child abuse. During the interview process applicants will be asked about previous work with children.

10.5 All volunteers and staff will receive training about Skogheim Christian Trust's Child Protection Policy. They will be given a copy of the policy, as well as the ministry's Code of Conduct and will be required to sign a declaration that they have received and understood it.

10.6 The Child Protection Policy will be made available to the public via the organisations website and by having a hard copy available for perusal in the centre office.

10.7 Individuals who are hired as independent contractors and will be in direct contact with children in the care of Skogheim Christian Trust, will be given a copy of the organisation's Code of Conduct and required to sign a declaration that they have received and understood it.

10.8 Volunteers with the organisation will be monitored by the full time staff supervisors to whom they are assigned, to ensure that these policy measures are implemented and adhered to.

Where there are concerns managers should inform the Child Protection Officer who will investigate further.

10.9 Training, learning opportunities and support will be given to all staff and their children, and volunteers.

10.10 All employees, parents, children and volunteers will have access to child friendly reporting procedures, including contact details for reporting possible child abuse.

## **11. Communication about children**

11.1 Communication about children should use pictures that are decent and respectful, not presenting them as victims. Children should be adequately clothed and poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive should be avoided. Language that implies a relationship of power should also be avoided. However, we also recognise there are times when children are in reality victims, for example, of famine. In such cases the child's dignity should still be preserved whilst presenting the reality.

11.2 Web sites and other promotional materials should not use scanned images of children without formal permission of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child (where possible). This permission should be in writing.

11.3 Personal and physical information about a child that could be used to identify the location of the child should not be used on the organisations web sites or in any other form of communication about the child.

## **12. Partner ministries**

When we work through partners they have a responsibility to meet the minimum standards of protection for children in their program as stipulated in this policy. They will be required to sign and abide by the Skogheim Christian Trust's Child Protection Policy.

## **13. Code of conduct**

All Skogheim Christian Trust's staff and volunteers must sign and abide by this Code of Conduct.

**Staff, volunteers and others who are in contact with children must never:**

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children;
- develop physical / sexual relationships with children;
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive;
- act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse;
- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive;
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative;
- sleep alone in the same room, tent, bed or within any area with a child with whom they are working;
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves;
- condone or participate in behaviour by 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 preferential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of other children.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff and volunteers should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

**It is important for all staff, volunteers and others in contact with children to:**

- be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these;

- plan and organise the workplace and the activities so as to minimise risks;
- as far as possible, be visible in working with children;
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists between volunteers contract staff and staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged;
- report any form of potential abuse as quickly as possible.

**In general it is inappropriate to:**

- spend excessive time alone with children away from others;
- take children to your place of lodging or go to theirs, especially where they will be alone with you.

## **14. Procedures for reporting suspected or actual abuse of children at Skogheim Christian Trust**

### **14.1 Immediate action**

Should a person in Skogheim Christian Trust observe or receive any information about actual or suspected abuse within the context of Skogheim Christian Trust's activities he or she must immediately inform the Child Protection Officer. Where appropriate the matter will be referred for further investigation.

Any person who has knowledge or suspicion that a child is at risk must report this to the appropriate full time Skogheim Christian Trust staff member, who must consult the appropriate Child Protection Officer. Together they will determine what action to take.

In order that a high standard of reporting and responding is met, members of Skogheim Christian Trust undertake to:

- take seriously any concerns raised;
- take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns;
- support children, parents, staff or other volunteers who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns;
- act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation;
- be guided through the child protection process by the principle of "the best interests of the child";
- listen to and take seriously the views and wishes of children;
- work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

### **14.2 Reporting child abuse by someone outside Skogheim Christian Trust**

If a member of staff suspects that a child is being abused by family members (e.g. grandpa/aunt/uncle) or other people, he/she must follow the procedure described below:

- Note the date and time you identified the abuse.
- Write a report, using the child's own words as far as possible.
- Note the reason for suspecting abuse.
- Report his/her concerns to the Child Protection Officer.

### **14.3 Reporting child abuse by someone inside Skogheim Christian Trust**

If a worker/teacher/volunteer suspects that a child is being abused by a Skogheim Christian Trust's employee, teacher or volunteer, the following procedure is applicable:

- Ensure there is no further contact between the alleged abuser and any child, including the victim. This may involve ensuring that the suspected person has no further involvement with others on the activity until the reporting and investigation is completed.
- Note the date and time the suspected abuse was identified. Write a report, using the child's own words as far as possible.
- Note the reason for suspecting abuse.
- Report the matter to the Child Protection Officer.

#### **14.4 Confidentiality**

The issue of confidentiality is of the utmost importance when dealing with issues and concerns regarding possible abuse. Skogheim Christian Trust staff members and volunteers must exercise extreme vigilance in protecting information and must pass on this information via the reporting process as described. Any matters regarding the abuse or the matter in general must only be discussed within the above mentioned reporting structure. The status of the child suspected of being abused should not be disclosed to any persons outside of the reporting structure without the informed written consent of the child.

#### **14.5 External procedures**

The South African Police Service is governed by law to:

- receive and investigate complaints;
- obtain sworn statements; and
- arrest the alleged offenders.

#### **14.6 Confidential record keeping**

Any concerns, allegations or disclosure must be written down at the time or as soon as possible after the concern has been raised. Records must be signed and dated.

Records must be kept in a safe place which is not accessible to those outside the reporting process. Records must be locked away. Information may only be shared with relevant parties and it must always be done in such a way that confidentiality is maintained.

Disciplinary steps will be taken to deal with the situation according to the Skogheim Christian Trust's Investigation Policy. Any staff member, teacher or volunteer of Skogheim Christian Trust found to have abused a child while they were a staff member, teacher or volunteer at Skogheim Christian Trust will be subjected to immediate dismissal following this investigation and Skogheim Christian Trust may decide to begin legal action against the former staff member, teacher or volunteer.

### **15. Implementation of the policy**

All Skogheim Christian Trust staff members/volunteers are obliged to sign the Skogheim Christian Trust Child Protection Policy and are obliged to adhere to all of its contents.

### **16. Declaration of acceptance**

Skogheim Christian Trust considers acceptance of the contents of the Child Protection Policy a precondition of any relationship within Skogheim Christian Trust for any and all persons mentioned in Paragraphs 9 and 10. This policy should be signed and dated before commencement of this relationship. Skogheim Christian Trust will keep the Declaration of Acceptance on file.

Any and all persons mentioned in Paragraphs 9 and 10 must keep the remainder of the policy for their own safe keeping.

## **DECLARATION**

### **Skogheim Christian Trust Child Protection Policy**

I hereby declare that I have read and understand the Skogheim Christian Trust Child Protection Policy and agree to abide by its contents.

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Print Name

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Signature

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Date