



RIFCOM CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Statement of Commitment to Child Protection

The Rif Community Foundation, a Gibraltar charity with Charity Commission registration number 201 (hereinafter referred to as RIFCOM), is committed to achieving the highest level of protection for children with whom they come into contact. RIFCOM also recognises the welfare of a child is of the utmost importance.

RIFCOM recognises that all children (classified as all individuals under the age of 18), whatever their culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse. RIFCOM affirms Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and aims to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person.

RIFCOM recognises that as an NGO working with children, it has a fundamental duty to care for its beneficiaries and a responsibility to ensure that all beneficiaries are treated with dignity and respect and that certain minimum standards of behaviour are observed both in relief and development interventions. RIFCOM goal is to create an environment free of sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crisis situations, through integrating the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse into the protection and assistance functions of all humanitarian workers. RIFCOM tries to ensure that any interaction with children is a positive experience.

RIFCOM recognises that some children, such as disabled children, are particularly vulnerable. Prejudice and discrimination can prevent some children from getting the help they need. RIFCOM aims to ensure these individuals in particular are protected and receive the support they require.

RIFCOM affirms that all suspicions and allegations of poor practice, bullying or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Who should abide by this policy?

Everybody who works with children has a duty of care to them and this is a responsibility, which must be taken seriously. This policy applies to all RIFCOM personnel including staff, management, interns, volunteers, those availing of work experience and those contracted to work with RIFCOM and in all RIFCOM organised activities and events.

All RIFCOM volunteers are briefed according to this policy.



Working in Partnership with Other Agencies

RIFCOM is an intermediary organisation working with partner organisations. In some instances, RIFCOM will work collaboratively with other agencies in organising events with children. There are many different forms that this work may take. However, where the event is being run in the name of RIFCOM, our Child Protection guidelines (as outlined in this document) will apply.

Safe Practice

Safe practice is essential in our work and we have put in place the following procedures to govern our work with children and youth:

Designated Person Appointment

A 'Designated Person (DP)' is appointed to deal with any complaints or issues that arise which concern the safety or welfare of any child. This person is appropriately trained and familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation, concern or disclosure of child abuse.

Designated Person in Morocco

Good Practice

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all children/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each child first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with children (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.

You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay or allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching. Physical contact should only be in response to the needs of the child and should be appropriate to the age and the level of development of the child. Any such contact should be initiated by the child and should be open and acceptable to all parties.
- Share a room with a child or offer a child a lift in your car / vehicle.
- Allow inappropriate or offensive behaviour/language by children or adults to go unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- Disrespect or mock the culture's traditions. Do not talk about religion, politics or known sensitive topics.



- Push children to talk about their personal problems.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- Show favouritism towards any one child. Instead, you should ensure that the relationship is constructive and aims to build the independence and autonomy of the child.
- Avoid spending time alone with children away from others.

Practical example / daily work situation

1. Is it okay to hug and kiss children? Why not?

We are volunteers, we are not family members. We are not staying in these children's lives. It will affect them negatively when you leave.

Also, we don't want the children to get used to strangers getting close to them and touching them. They need to know who to trust. Keep in mind that human trafficking is an issue that beneficiaries might face.

How to avoid it: whenever a child comes close to you to hug you just teach them how to high-five. Get them used to this so they will only high-five you.

2. Can you exchange phone numbers or contact information (or even Facebook accounts)?

You are not here to make friends, you are here to provide a service. Staying in touch with the beneficiaries can be a burden on you and them. They will always think of you as someone who can help them with everything and you will always feel that you want to help but you cannot. There are proper ways to help them and you are doing your part. Avoid future connections with them.

You will never be just friends. Not until you are no longer in a position where access to things that they require for their basic dignity and freedom no longer depend on you.

3. Can you accept gifts/food from them? Why not?

You are a volunteer who is in a position of power dynamic- both in terms of material wealth, personal freedoms, and your designated role as the volunteer "helping the vulnerable".

4. Can you give them gifts/food? Why not?

There might be special treatment. It's either you give everyone in an organized manner, or you don't give anyone at all. You need to treat them equally. You cannot abuse this power dynamic by taking food or gifts from them because when they offer, sometimes it is out of the impression that doing so will make them favoured/allow them to benefit in some ways. By refusing politely you are quickly shutting down your reinforcement of this power dynamic.

5. What if they're doing it because they really just like me and don't expect anything back and not taking it will insult them?

Taking from one beneficiary will make other beneficiaries jealous, especially those who have nothing to offer, and will feel further disempowered

6. *How do I deal with the embarrassment and awkwardness?*

- be clear that you truly appreciate the gesture, and especially with kids to say you don't need things to know how much they care about you, and you care about them too. but that you cannot accept any gifts or food (nor, for that matter, can you offer any or gift anything!)
- explain that this may seem unfair to other beneficiaries, and also - because many will say why do they have to know! And try to give it to you secretly.
- blame work – it's not allowed and doing so will get you in trouble.

Suspicious of Abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into five different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, exploitation and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

Indicators of Concern

It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Signs must also be considered in the child's social and family context as child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. It is important to always be open to alternative explanations for possible physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

If you notice any of the following, you should report this immediately to the DP:

- If you or someone else accidentally hurts a child
- If a child seems distressed in any manner
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done
- If a child comes forward and discloses any concerns of child abuse

It is not the responsibility of anyone in RIFCOM, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate person within RIFCOM to refer upwards.

Types of Child Abuse

1) Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent minor or serious injuries
- Untreated illness
- Hunger, malnutrition

- Tiredness
- Inadequate and inappropriate clothing
- Low self esteem
- Lack of peer relationships

2) Emotional

It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Unreasonable mood and/or behavioural changes
- Aggression, withdrawal or an 'I don't care attitude'
- Lack of attachment
- Low self esteem
- Attention seeking
- Depression or suicide attempts
- Persistent nightmares, disturbed sleep, bedwetting, reluctance to go to bed
- A fear of adults or particular individuals e.g. family member, baby-sitter or indeed excessive clinginess to parents
- Panic attacks

3) Physical

Any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries
- Torn clothing
- Bite marks burns or welts
- Bruises in places difficult to mark e.g. behind ears, groin
- Undue or unnecessary fear
- Aggressiveness or withdrawn

4) Sexual

A child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge given the child's age
- Hints about sexual activity
- Discomfort

5) Exploitation

The use of children for someone else's advantage, or profit.



Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Over confidence, sense of importance/maturity
- Very tired, sleeping in school, absenteeism
- Physical impacts: bent back, weaker, damage to hands

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

You should always report suspicions of child abuse (to the DP) when you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- Specific indication from the child that s/he was abused;
- An account by the person who saw the child being abused;
- Evidence such as injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way;
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

A suspicion, not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, does not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

(Children First 1999, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3)

Concerns about suspected abuse

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a staff member or a volunteer should be reported to the designated RIFCOM individual (DP), who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The RIFCOM DP will refer the allegation to any other NGOs who deal with child protection specifically or to the police
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from either of the parties mentioned above.
- If the RIFCOM DP is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Senior Manager or another member of the Core Team.

Internal enquiries and suspension

- The DP will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police/official inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of any inquiries or investigation, the DP must consider whether the member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated. A decision must be reached upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Confidentiality



The issue of child protection demands clear codes of confidentiality. This policy aims to protect the child and ensure that only those with a clear 'need to know' will be involved in dealing with the case. The information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

In all matters of confidentiality, the child's age and their understanding need to be taken into account. As a general rule, the younger the child, the greater the need to involve parents/other agencies if their safety or welfare is threatened. Parents and children have a right to know if personal information about them is being shared, unless doing so would place the child at increased risk. (If this is the case, the basis for this decision not to inform the parents should be recorded.)

If you are accused of an abusive action

- Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible
- Contact the DP
- Seek access to professional and legal advice
- Ensure you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation
- Consult RIFCOM procedures and make sure these are followed correctly
- Avoid any discussions around the topic/allegations with anyone outside of the proper procedures



Child Protection Declaration Form

Declaration from all persons working with children and young people

Confidential

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that a child is under the age of 18 years of age. The convention, which takes due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each person for the protection and harmonious development of the child, states that a child has a right to be protected from physical and mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse. All countries, except the USA, have signed in agreement with the UNCRC and agreed to adopt it into international law in 1990.

In accordance with this convention, we ask that all persons working or volunteering with us abide by good practice and agree to keep children safe from harm when relating to and working with children. In addition, we ask that all persons declare the following:

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution or of a Bound Over Order (please tick)

YES NO

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s)

Full Name:		Any Previous Surname:	
Place of Birth:		Date of Birth:	
Address:			

DECLARATION

I understand that, if it is found that I have withheld information or included any false or misleading information above, I will be removed from my post whether paid or voluntary, without notice. I understand that the information will be kept securely by the organisation.

I hereby declare the information I have provided is accurate.

Signed: _____ Date: _____