



**Child Protection Policy – Ireland and Northern Ireland**

**This Policy applies to the Self Help Africa Board, all Self Help Africa (and subsidiary company) employees, including affiliate organisations, and to all paid and unpaid consultants, contractors, interns, secondees and volunteers that provide supplies, services or support, to Self Help Africa or promote its work at any location in Ireland and the United Kingdom. All such parties are referred to as “employee” in this document. All visitors to Self Help Africa projects will be bound by this policy.**

“Self Help Africa Board” is employed as a collective term and refers to the Self Help Africa Ireland Board as well as the boards of Self Help Africa UK, Gorta UK, Partner Africa, Traidlinks, TruTrade and the boards of any entities that may form part of the group in the future.

This Policy also applies to Self Help Africa’s partners, vendors and other third parties, where it is included or referenced in relevant bid or tender documents, agreements, memorandums, purchase orders or contracts. It applies to Self Help Africa international staff who are in Ireland and Northern Ireland, for both private or professional reasons.

*Version Control*

<i>Version No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>By (Name, Position)</i>	<i>Details of changes</i>	<i>Reviewed and approved by (Name, Position)</i>
1	2013	Ray Jordan, CEO	N/a	SHA Board
2	<b>24.5.2018</b>	David Dalton, Executive Director	Pledge, Serious Wrongdoing Investigation and appointment of Child Protection Focal Person; including requirements of Children’s First Act, 2015	SHA Board on 24.5.2018

David Dalton

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*Executive Director*

Peter McDevitt

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*Chief Finance and Operations Officer*

## POLICY STATEMENT

Self Help Africa recognises the rights of all children with whose families we work, to be protected from harm in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Self Help Africa takes seriously its duty of care, and undertakes that our organisation is safe for children, where all efforts are made to prevent abuse. Self Help Africa does not employ persons under 18 years of age. Self Help Africa sees the best interests of the child as paramount. We do this by:

- Preventing abuse where possible by setting in place and implementing procedures to protect children through best recruitment practices, staff induction and training, creating an open and aware culture, assigning clear management responsibilities and involving children appropriately in their own protection.
- In the event of disclosure or discovery of abuse following clear guidelines and procedures for reporting and reacting, dealing promptly and properly with incidents, supporting victims and holding perpetrators to account.
- By appointing a Child Protection Focal Person at Head Office to oversee training and deal with child protection concerns.

The global responsibility for managing this policy lies with the Executive Director with the support of the Child Protection Focal Person. The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that a Child Protection Focal Person is nominated for both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

For the purpose of this policy Self Help Africa defines children as those under the age of 18.

## WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

According to the World Health Organisation, “Child abuse” or “maltreatment” constitutes ‘all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.’ The NSPCC similarly specifies “cruelty to children” or “child abuse” as ‘behaviour that causes significant harm to a child. It also includes when someone knowingly fails to prevent serious harm to a child. All forms of cruelty are damaging – it can be harder to recover from the emotional impact than from the physical effects.’

There are 4 categories of abuse generally defined:

**Physical abuse:** Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

**Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. It includes the inappropriate use of technology and social media; e.g., the storage or dissemination of pornography, the recording or sharing abusive images using technology such as via mobile phone texting, audio, video, images, podcasts, social networking websites and other multimedia or communications platforms.

**Emotional abuse:** Emotional abuse includes humiliation, blaming, frightening, threatening, terrorising, discrimination, ridiculing, and other non-physical forms of rejection or hostile treatment.

**Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and physiological needs. Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where a child’s health safety, development or welfare is being avoidably impaired.

## IDENTIFYING ABUSE AND TAKING ACTION

It is everyone’s responsibility to report any potential or actual abuse to a child’s wellbeing and safety. Any abuse, attempted abuse or suspected abuse of a child must be passed to the Executive Director, or his/her

delegate, in this case the Child Protection Focal Person. The Executive Director has the authority to invoke the Serious Wrongdoing Investigation Plan in Self Help Africa in response to a report of abuse.

### TRAINING

- 1) Relevant Self Help Africa staff must undergo child protection training.
- 2) Awareness and update training will be arranged and provided as necessary.
- 3) All staff members have a responsibility to consider and help minimise child protection risks within their own areas of responsibility.

### WORKING DIRECTLY WITH CHILDREN

Staff members, who work directly with children must obtain police clearance as a condition of employment.

### RECORDING IMAGES

Self Help Africa applies the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (<http://www.dochas.ie/images-and-messages>) regarding the use of images (photographic/film or other). The following guidelines must be adhered to: i) Ask the child(ren)'s parent's/guardian's permission to take the photograph/image; ii) Individuals must be appropriately dressed according to their choice and country of origin; iii) Any complaints or concerns about inappropriate or intrusive images must be reported and recorded; iv) The recorded images should focus on an activity and, where possible, feature groups of children rather than individuals; v) Make sure that photographers and film makers are not allowed to spend time with or have access to children without supervision.

### GUIDING LAWS, DOCUMENTS AND PRINCIPLES

#### Republic of Ireland law, policy and guidance

- Children First Act, 2015
- Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, DCYA, 2014
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons Act), 2012
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, DCYA 2017
- Criminal Justice Act, 2006
- Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998
- Child Care Act, 1991
- The Constitution of Ireland

#### Northern Ireland law, policy and guidance

Safeguarding Board Act (NI), 2011

Our Duty to Care (Volunteer Now), 2011

Our Children and Young People: Our Pledge, 2006

Cooperating to Safeguard Children, 2003

Children (NI) Order, 1995

Criminal Law Act (NI), 1967)

## COMMUNICATING THE “KEEP CHILDREN SAFE” MESSAGE

Self Help Africa believes that the effectiveness of its policy and procedures on child safeguarding and protection will best be realised if its stakeholders are aware of them, can contribute to their implementation and provide feedback. Therefore we commit to the following:

- Information about our commitment to keeping children safe is openly displayed and available to the public.
- Where we are working with children, they are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse
- Information and advice for children/parents/guardians, in understandable format, about where to go for help in relation to child abuse is available in our offices and shops.
- Employees know who has responsibility for child safeguarding and how to contact them.

## PREVENTION OF EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

In order to ensure that this policy is implemented and that steps are taken to protect children, a number of procedures are in place to encourage a culture of safety and to prevent harm to children in the course of carrying out our work.

### Safe recruitment

Self Help Africa ensures that appropriate steps are taken during recruitment and selection of employees and representatives, to ensure that issues relating to safeguarding children are considered and addressed.

The following have special considerations with reference to child safeguarding:

- **Job Description:** Child protection is referenced in all job descriptions and applies to all employees and representatives.
- **Interview:** questions in relation to child protection must be included in all interviews. It is not expected that all new recruits would have an in-depth knowledge of child protection, unless it is a specific requirement of the role. However, it is important that all candidates are aware of Self Help Africa’s commitment to safeguarding children and the expectation that all employees recognise, report and respond to incidents of child exploitation and abuse.
- **Reference Checks** A thorough check of employment references is carried out and includes a question in relation to safeguarding, e.g. “Self Help Africa aims to protect all children involved in our work against risks of exploitation and abuse - do you have any reason to deem this person unsuitable to work with children or adults who may be vulnerable?”.
- **Self-Declaration:** successful candidates are asked to declare any prosecutions pending against them, convictions of criminal offences, official cautions or other legally binding orders. This should be completed before contracts are signed.
- **Contract:** Safeguarding policies - Code of Conduct, etc., to be signed by all new employees before commencing work with Self Help Africa.

- **Police Clearance/Vetting:** All employees and third parties with direct access to children through their work must be police vetted.

#### RISK ASSESSMENT AND SAFE ACTIVITIES

Child safeguarding considerations such as exploitation and abuse should be included in all risk assessments to ensure that all activities are conducted in a safe and dignified manner. Where it has been identified that activities involve children then a Safe Activities checklist must be completed and relevant safeguards implemented.

#### REPORTING, RESPONDING AND MONITORING

All Self Help Africa employees have a responsibility to report any concerns about the exploitation and abuse of children.

##### Responding to Reports or Allegations

In Ireland and the United Kingdom, Self Help Africa recognises that when specific reports or allegations of abuse are made, this will always be referred as soon as possible to the appropriate authorities for investigation. Any information offered in confidence will be received on the basis that it will be shared with relevant people in authority: this would include members of the senior management team if appropriate, child protection personnel in civil authorities.

When the allegation/complaint relates to a Self Help Africa employee, they will be informed at the appropriate time of the allegation/complaint/suspicion and the external reporting requirements that must be followed by the organisation. The employee will also be informed of any decision to remove or suspend them from any or all duties or duties that involve working with children. This decision will be made using the guiding principle that the safety of the child is always the most important consideration.

Procedures will be conducted in accordance with national guidelines. If necessary Self Help Africa will conduct its own internal investigation to assess whether a breach of organisation policy has occurred. If founded, a breach of policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

##### Guidance for staff who receive a complaint

Self Help Africa employees must report any suspected incident of exploitation or abuse (both current and historical) of an individual(s) immediately. Reports may relate to, but not be limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, exploitation, sexual exploitation and abuse or neglect. However, it is not the role of the individual staff member to investigate beyond the need to ensure that any report of an incident is accurate and is sufficiently detailed to be the basis for a decision regarding next steps to be taken.

Actions to be taken when a concern, suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse is received:

- Respond immediately to any concern, suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse.
- As soon as possible refer all information to the Child Protection Focal Person.
- CFPF will assess the information and will follow up the matter with the civil authorities.

## IRELAND SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Obligations under Irish Law are encompassed by the term Children First. Children First deals with the recognition of child abuse and neglect, the reporting of same to Tusla – the Child and Family Agency, and the best practice which organisations should adhere to, to keep children safe while availing of their services. Non statutory obligations for all persons coming into contact with children are set out in the Children First Guidance, and the Children First Act 2015 sets out additional statutory obligations for defined categories of persons and for organisations providing relevant services to children.

### Organisations working with children and young people

Children First: National Guidance outlines that all organisations working with children and young people should create a culture of safety that promotes the welfare of children and young people availing of their services. Self Help Africa is a ‘relevant services’ provider as defined in the Children First Act 2015 and therefore has specific statutory obligations under the Act. Set out below are statutory obligations of relevant services and [Safeguarding Best Practice Procedures](#).

### Statutory obligations of relevant services

As per statutory requirements under The Children First Act 2015, Self Help Africa commits to:

- Keep children **safe from harm** while they are using the service.
- Carry out a **risk assessment** to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while availing of the service.
- Develop a **Child Safeguarding Statement** that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified.
- Appoint a **relevant person** to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation’s Child Safeguarding Statement..

Training on Children First is available at: <https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/>

**RESPONSIBILITY**

**I accept that I must:**

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/behave in a way that places a child at risk of harm.
2. Report any child abuse and protection concerns that I have. This is a mandatory requirement under this policy.
3. Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
4. Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
5. Be aware that, if a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter.
6. Never share my personal contact details (this includes email, phone numbers, social media contacts, address, webcam, Skype etc.) with, nor ask for, or accept such details from any child associated with Self Help Africa’s work.
7. Never make any unsupervised direct/indirect contact (such contact may include but is not limited to visits and any form of communication via social media, emails, letters etc) that is intended to establish personal relationships with any child associated with Self Help Africa.
8. Uphold the principles of the Child Protection Policy outside work/in their personal life.

**I have read, agree with, and will adhere to Self Help Africa’s Child Protection Policy.**

**Name (block letters):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Position/relationship to SHA:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

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