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Afrikaya Child Protection [Safeguarding] Policy [July 2014]

Policy Statement

Afrikaya is fully committed to actively safeguarding the [1] security, [2] privacy, and [3] dignity of the children who attend the Afrikaya Nursery School and, in particular, those children who take part in the Afrikaya Sponsorship Programme. Afrikaya has decided to seek individual child sponsorship but will take every step to ensure that each child is protected from harm.

[1] What is child security?

Children have the right to be completely secure from the fear or reality of abuse resulting from any inappropriate contact with any adult which, for the purpose of this policy, means anyone who works for Afrikaya in a paid role or voluntary role, including a member of staff, a volunteer, an Afrikaya trustee, a member of the School Management Committee [SMC], a sponsor or any other person. We take seriously our responsibility to promote child-safe practices and to protect children from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation in any form within the school environment.

Afrikaya will take positive action [for example, police checks of all staff] to prevent child abusers from becoming involved with Afrikaya and will instigate legal action against any school staff, volunteers, sponsors, consultants, contractors, vendors, advisors, official guests of Afrikaya, government representatives, and visitors to the Afrikaya Nursery School [**herein called **Afrikaya Associates****] who abuse a child.

Although the Children Act [The Gambia, 2005] does not explicitly prohibit all corporal punishment or repeal the common law defence of “reasonable chastisement”, corporal punishment is not tolerated in the Afrikaya Nursery School. Any staff member who uses corporal punishment against a child will be immediately dismissed in line with their contract of employment. Corporal punishment is defined by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as:

"any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light."

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [1989] provides the foundation for Afrikaya's child protection stance both in The Gambia and in the UK. All decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of “the best interests of the child”.

The Gambia is a State Party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and one of the few countries that has a comprehensive Children's Act [Gambia, 2005], which harmonises domestic laws with the Convention as well as with other child-focused international conventions and declarations.

What is the safeguarding responsibility of an **Afrikaya Associate**

It is the responsibility of an **Afrikaya Associate** to:

- Be aware of situations that may present risks and learn how to avoid those situations or minimise risk.
- Contribute to an environment where children are able to recognise unacceptable behaviour and feel able to discuss their rights and concerns.
- Wherever practical, ensure that any contact with children is in public. Avoid being alone with a child.
- Raise concerns about any suspected abuse with the Head Teacher, Afrikaya's Representative or with the chair of the School Management Committee. It is their responsibility to immediately inform the Afrikaya trustees in the UK.

Conduct that constitutes child abuse

Abusive conduct includes, but is not limited to, any activity related to:

- Sexual abuse;
- Sexual harassment;
- Physically and verbally abusive behaviour;
- Emotional ill-treatment;
- Neglect or negligent treatment;
- Commercial or other exploitation of a child;

Child abuse may be a deliberate act or could be failing to act to prevent harm. It consists of anything that individuals, organisations, or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages his or her prospects of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

Child Sponsorship Programme and child security

The sponsor is given the first name and a pen picture of each child they sponsor. Any further information is intentionally withheld.

Visits to the Afrikaya Nursery School can be made only with the agreement of Afrikaya trustees, the Afrikaya Representative in The Gambia or the Head Teacher.

Sponsor's visits to individual sponsored children must only be arranged via Afrikaya. Applications in writing must be made 2 months in advance.

The sponsorship process depends on the sponsor's undertaking that they will **NOT** attempt to contact any child who attends the school, his or her family or community members, in any manner other than that prescribed and permitted in advance in writing by Afrikaya.

All postal mail and packages intended for a sponsored child can only be sent to Afrikaya's Representatives in The Gambia and will be first opened by them. Afrikaya retain the right to refuse to pass on any material, written or otherwise, that they consider to be not in the best interests of the child.

As participation in the Afrikaya Sponsorship Programme requires a bond of trust between Afrikaya, the children involved in the Programme, and their families, all **Afrikaya Associates** must:

- Refrain from disclosing information [including the use of the child's family name] that could identify sponsored children or their families to a third party, for example, via social media.

- Handle sensitively the use of images of sponsored children on the internet, particularly via social media.

Other **Afrikaya Associates and child security**

These standards apply to all **Afrikaya Associates**, as well as child sponsors, who come into contact with children while supporting, working, or officially travelling for Afrikaya or visiting the Afrikaya Nursery School.

All **Afrikaya Associates**, must bear in mind the principles of this policy and be aware how their behaviour may be perceived whilst working for Afrikaya, visiting the school, and even in leisure time. Unlawful or other conduct by Afrikaya employees and **Associates** that violates the intent of the Child Protection Policy and jeopardises Afrikaya’s reputation, whether during school time or outside of it, will not be tolerated.

[2] What is child privacy?

Children and their families must be confident that Afrikaya is protecting the integrity of information [including photographs] that is shared about them with the public. Afrikaya takes potential abuse of child photographs on the internet very seriously.

Privacy also demands that children, their families and communities be shielded from any potential inappropriate contact from sponsors or others.

How does the online sponsorship process seek to protect child privacy?

Downloading, copying, or other replication of photos or other information that are a part of this website without advance written permission from Afrikaya is strictly forbidden.

Only a brief pen picture and first name of each child will be given. For example “Omar is age 5 and lives with his mother and father and 6 older siblings. His father is out of work and his mother sells vegetables in the local market”.

[3] What is the definition of child dignity?

The lives of children, their families, and members of their community should be portrayed with **accuracy and dignity**. The children and adults Afrikaya works with are not objects to be pitied, but are partners with us in the process of bringing holistic (spiritual, physical, psychological and social) transformation to communities in poverty and in transforming the hearts of beneficiaries and donors alike.

How does the online sponsorship process seek to uphold child dignity?

Afrikaya:

- Is committed to portraying the life situation of the children, families and the community they serve with accuracy and dignity and works collaboratively with them.
- Seeks the full, informed consent of parents and guardians for any child’s participation in the Sponsorship Program. In effect, parents apply for a child to be part of the Sponsorship Programme following defined criteria.

If there are any queries about this policy, please email afrikaythecharity@gmail.com