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Child Safeguarding Guideline

1. Purpose and Aim

Act Church of Sweden¹ operates in development cooperation, advocacy and humanitarian aid. As a faith based organisation, Act Church of Sweden cooperates with other churches and faith based actors locally and globally to speak and act for human dignity. As an established organisation in development cooperation, advocacy and humanitarian aid, Act Church of Sweden is committed to advancing the realisation of human rights for all together with other actors.²

The purpose of this Child safeguarding guideline is to explicate Act Church of Sweden's commitment to child safeguarding and to outline policies, procedures and practices that are employed to ensure that it is child safe. This guideline complies with the *ACT Alliance Child Safeguarding Policy* and *Act Church of Sweden's Code of Conduct for the Prevention of misconduct, including corruption, fraud, and exploitation and abuse, including sexual; and to ensure child safeguarding (Code of Conduct)*³. It has been developed utilising global best practices and standards in child safeguarding⁴ and it applies to all Act Church of Sweden staff as defined in the *Code of Conduct*.⁵

2. Commitment

All children have equal right to be safe.⁶ In addition to the general responsibility to support safeguarding of children, Act Church of Sweden recognises its specific duty of care to the children who are affected by its work.

Act Church of Sweden works together with international and local partners, such as churches, faith-based and other civil society actors. Programmatic activities often take place under difficult circumstances where children might be displaced, separated from their family or orphaned and removed from their usual social environment. Children who are physically or mentally injured or have a disability are particularly vulnerable. In many contexts gender contributes to a child's vulnerability. As a faith based actor Act Church of Sweden recognises the role of faith communities may have in mitigating but also contributing to risk towards children.

¹ As of May 2019 the Church of Sweden International work was renamed Act Church of Sweden. The name has been updated accordingly throughout the document

² Church of Sweden, "Strategic Plan," 2018, para. 7.

³ "Code of Conduct for Act Church of Sweden," 2016.

⁴ These include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Minimum Standard for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Keeping Children Safe Standards.

⁵ Including national and international, permanent and temporary staff, their dependents, interns, consultants, observers, volunteers, international commission and all individuals working for or representing the organisation. Church of Sweden, "Code of Conduct for Act Church of Sweden," para. 2.

⁶ Irrespective of social status, race, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, political affiliation or disability. Church of Sweden, para. 1.

Act Church of Sweden respects and abides by national and international law. At times Act Church of Sweden's codes and policies may be stricter than local or national legislation. In these cases staff are obliged to adhere to Act Church of Sweden codes or policies.

Act Church of Sweden commits to the principles of this child safeguarding guideline in all levels of decision-making and activities.⁷

3. Guiding Principles

Act Church of Sweden recognises a duty to safeguard children who Act Church of Sweden work with, are in contact with, or who are affected by Act Church of Sweden's work and operations.

1. **Recognition of the best interest of the child**

Act Church of Sweden adheres to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is committed to upholding the rights and obligations under this convention.

Act Church of Sweden respects children's right to participate in decisions affecting them, and have their views heard and acted upon. Children should also have access to making complaints⁸. Whenever there are conflicting interests, Act Church of Sweden will ensure that the best interest of the child always comes first.⁹

2. **Zero tolerance of child exploitation and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse**

Act Church of Sweden does not tolerate any form of child exploitation or abuse, including sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Prohibited behaviour includes inappropriate language or behaviour when dealing with a child or children, bullying and harassing a child verbally or physically, physical punishment, exposing a child to pornography, grooming and trafficking, visiting bars, restaurants or other premises where minors are exposed sexually and contravening the principle of duty of care. Whenever possible, staff should avoid being alone with a child. Use of child labour is forbidden. Staff must never engage in any sexual activity with a child or children regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Staff must never consume, purchase, sell, possess or distribute any forms of child pornography.¹⁰ Act Church of Sweden will not knowingly engage, directly or indirectly, with anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children.

3. **Adherence to all child protection laws**

Act Church of Sweden's staff will adhere to local and international child protection legislation in countries where they travel and work.¹¹ In cases where local legislation or cultural practices are in conflict with this Child Safeguarding guideline and the Code of Conduct, staff are expected to be compliant with the higher standard.

⁷ Church of Sweden, "Strategic Plan," sec. 3.1.8. Quality and Accountability; Church of Sweden, "Code of Conduct for Act Church of Sweden," sec. 3. Standards of Behaviour.

⁸ Church of Sweden, "Guidelines for Handling Complaints for Act Church of Sweden," 2017.

⁹ Church of Sweden has since 2013 committed to child impact analysis in all decision-making. Church of Sweden, *Barnkonsekvensanalyser i Svenska Kyrkan*, 2012.

¹⁰ Church of Sweden, "Code of Conduct for Act Church of Sweden," sec. 4 Misconduct.

¹¹ CoC

4. Implementation

I Child Safe Recruitment of staff

Act Church of Sweden's commitment to child-safe recruitment is defined in *Rutin för utdrag ur belastningsregistret I samband med rekrytering, 2018*.¹² According to Swedish law, employer is entitled to be informed of existing convictions for sexual offences against children entered in the criminal records if the applied position involves direct and frequent contact with children. The applicant is obliged to provide this information. Whether a position does involve direct and frequent contact with children will be decided by the recruiting manager.

II Child Safeguarding induction and training

Act Church of Sweden's staff receive training in child safeguarding both as part of orientation for new staff and as part of recurring trainings for all staff. Online e-learnings are accessible to the whole ACT Alliance and its partners. Act Church of Sweden may support partners in child safeguarding training. This is the case especially when the partner does not yet comply with the requirements listed in this guideline.

III Code of Conduct

All staff are requested to sign and comply with Act Church of Sweden's *Code of Conduct and National level Code of Conduct*. Non-compliance of the *Code of Conduct* will result in disciplinary action. Church of Sweden's human resources department will keep the signed copies in the personal file.

IV Child Safe Program Design and risk assessments

Child safety is observed both in activities focused on children and in programmes that may impact children's well-being. Act Church of Sweden commits to review its programmes to assess risks to children and develop appropriate mitigation strategies, where necessary. Act Church of Sweden also expects its partners to mainstream child safeguarding in existing programmes and do periodic reviews of their programmes to detect any new or emerging risks to children.

V Cooperation with partners

Staff working directly with partners will ensure that partners have a Code of Conduct for staff to prevent corruption, fraud, exploitation and abuse, including sexual; and to ensure child safeguarding, as defined in the Church of Sweden Cooperation Agreement.¹³ Staff working with partners who are members of ACT Alliance, work together to ensure that all comply with the ACT Alliance Child Safeguarding Policy.¹⁴

VI Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Child Safeguarding Concerns

A failure to observe principles outlined in this guideline is a breach of *Act Church of Sweden Code of Conduct*. These breaches are considered *sensitive complaints*.¹⁵ The Act Church of Sweden Complaints mechanism has been made accessible to children by providing various alternative ways of making complains.¹⁶ The focal points for complaints handling also serve as the child safeguarding focal points.

¹² Church of Sweden, "Rutin För Utdrag Ur Belastningsregistret," 2018.

¹³ Church of Sweden, "Cooperation Agreement 2018," 2018, sec. 4.11.; Church of Sweden, "General Conditions for the Cooperation Agreement, Appendix 1," 2018, sec. 11.

¹⁴ ACT Alliance, "ACT Alliance Child Safeguarding Policy May 2015," 2015.

¹⁵ Church of Sweden, "Guidelines for Handling Complaints for Act Church of Sweden." The Church of Sweden complaints mechanism complies with the CHS Investigation Guidelines, https://www.chsalliance.org/files/files/Investigation-Guidelines-2015_English.pdf

¹⁶ Church of Sweden. Guidelines for Handling Complaints.



Church of Sweden 

VII Child Safe Communication

Principles of child safe communication are outlined both in the Code of Conduct, the *Guidelines for Information sharing*, and the national Image Policy.¹⁷

VIII Monitoring compliance

This guideline has been approved by the International Director 2018-12-19. The guideline will be reviewed as minimum every three years, or when necessary. Regular monitoring of risks, risk mitigation and the effectiveness of the child safeguarding measures will be monitored and reviewed alongside Church of Sweden's internal auditing processes.

¹⁷ Church of Sweden, "Code of Conduct for Act Church of Sweden"; Church of Sweden, "Guidelines for Information Sharing," 2018; Church of Sweden, "Image Policy", 2016.

Definitions and terms

Child abuse

Child abuse is defined as an act (or failure to act) by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that endangers a child's physical or emotional health, development or dignity. Children of any gender can suffer all types of child abuse. Children often experience more than one type of abuse simultaneously:

- **Physical abuse** – the use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling or poisoning;
- **Emotional abuse** – a continuing pattern of inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or failure over time to provide a child with adequate nurturing and emotional availability. Emotionally abusive behaviour includes threats, rejection, isolation, belittling, and name calling.
- **Sexual abuse** – the use of power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity by an adult or significantly older child or adolescent. Sexually abusive behaviours can include touching genitals or breasts, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, and exposing the child to sex or pornography.
- **Neglect** – the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for the child's physical and emotional development and well-being.¹⁸

Child exploitation

Child exploitation is the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that is unacceptable because it deprives them of their childhood, education, development or dignity. It includes unacceptable child labour, child prostitution or trafficking, and child pornography.¹⁹

Child labour

The term “child labour” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling.

Child

A child is regarded to be any person under the age of 18 years²⁰

Child pornography

In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ‘child pornography’ means ‘any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.

Child Safeguarding

The set of internal facing, business critical policies, procedures and practice that the organisation employs to ensure that it is child safe. This includes ensuring that:

- All staff behave appropriately towards children and never abuse the position of trust that comes with their employment.

¹⁸ ChildFund Australia: <https://www.childfund.org.au/child-safeguarding-policy/>

¹⁹ ChildFund Australia: <https://www.childfund.org.au/child-safeguarding-policy/>

²⁰ Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

- All staff are aware of and respond appropriately to issues of child abuse and the sexual exploitation of children.
- The organisation creates a child-safe environment in all activities by always assessing and reducing potential risks to children.
- All staff are driven by the duty of care to children

Child-Safe Environment

A child-safe environment is one where active steps are taken to reduce risks of harm against, and there are clear, established guidelines and procedures for conduct, reporting abuse and follow-up.

Commercial or other exploitation of a child

The use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. Children being recruited in to the army would also come under this category.²¹

Informed consent

Permission given with full knowledge of risks involved, potential consequences and available alternatives.

Neglect and negligent treatment

Allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.²²

Grooming (including online)

Behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity.

Partners

Any organisation that is in an established partnership with Act Church of Sweden or benefits from funding provided by Act Church of Sweden.

Sexual exploitation

Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, sexually or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.²³

Staff

Refers to but is not limited to all permanent and temporary staff, their dependents, interns, consultants, observers, volunteers, elected representatives and all individuals working for or representing the organisation.

²¹ https://keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-uploads/KCS_STANDARDS_2014.pdf

²² https://keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-uploads/KCS_STANDARDS_2014.pdf

²³ United Nations (UN) Secretary General's Bulletin 2003/13, 9 October 2003; Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.