



THE MOROCCAN

CHILDREN'S TRUST

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Moroccan Children's Trust believes that NGOs working with children, and in particular street children, have an absolute duty to protect this already vulnerable group from abuse, mistreatment, and exploitation from external sources, but also from within organisations intended for their benefit. This duty is imperative and non-negotiable. Without adequate standards and mechanisms of protection in place, an organisation is not only failing in its primary duty of care, but may also be negligently or recklessly fostering an environment of abuse.

The MCT Child Protection Policy is firmly based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Taken holistically, the CRC provides a comprehensive framework for the protection, provision and participation of all children, without discrimination to ensure their survival and development to the maximum extent possible. On the understanding that the CRC must be read as a whole, the following articles nevertheless form the specific basis of child protection and form the guiding principles of this policy: 1 (definition of 'child'), 2 (nondiscrimination), 3.1 (the best interests of the child), 3.2 (duty of care and protection), 3.3 (standards of care), 6 (survival and development), 12 (participation), 13 (freedom of expression), 19 (protection from violence), 25 (periodic review of placements), 32, 33, 34, 36, 37(a) (protection from economic exploitation, substance abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, 'all other forms of exploitation'; torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment), 39 (physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration).

Street-involved children are especially vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and ill-treatment at the hands of external sources, but also their carers, other project workers, and those with access to their personal information. Many of these children have already experienced ruptured relationships of trust, or exploitative adult-child relationships in the form of physical, psychological or sexual abuse.

1.0 THE POLICY STATEMENT

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers and relates to all the children that use the services. MCT believe that all children accessing the services we provide have the right to do so in a safe

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environment. The policy aims to ensure that all staff and volunteers working with young people are safely selected and supported, and are made aware of the issues to consider and procedures to follow in the case of a child in distress. The policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to the following areas:

- Safe recruitment of staff and volunteers
- Induction and training for staff and volunteers
- Code of behaviour
- Supervision
- Communication about children
- Definitions and signs of abuse
- Guidelines on how to respond to disclosures of abuse
- Reporting procedures
- Whistle blowing procedures and ramifications of misconduct
- Safe environment
- Insurance
- Contact Details
- Policy review and signatures

In order to ensure a happy, safe and secure environment MCT will rigorously implement the following policy.

2.0 SAFE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

The following safe recruitment procedures are in place for all MCT staff and volunteers

- a. All potential staff and volunteers are to complete a written standard application form which includes

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1. a full employment history.
 2. a request for two referees.
 3. a declaration regarding whether they have ever been convicted, charged or cautioned in relation to any offence.
 4. a declaration regarding any complaints of abuse against them.
-
- b. All potential staff and volunteers are interviewed to find out about their past experience and attitudes. There will always be at least one member of the interview panel who is trained in child protection.
 - c. MCT will take up the two references specified in the application form (non related, minimum of two year relationship with the candidate)
 - d. All successful candidates must sign a personal declaration of criminal convictions.
 - e. All UK staff and volunteers will undergo a CRB check / registration with the ISA. Staff and volunteers from outside the UK should undergo their country equivalent 'police check' where one exists.
 - f. Staff / volunteers may begin working with children before the disclosure has been received providing the other recruitment criteria have been met satisfactorily, and providing they are supervised at all times by staff / volunteers who have already obtained satisfactory disclosures.
 - g. Criteria for not appointing staff / volunteers are outlined in appendix 1.

1. **INDUCTION AND TRAINING FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

- a. All staff and volunteers are given a copy of this policy and are required to sign to say they have read it and are committed to carrying it out.
- b. All staff and volunteers will have induction including child protection policy principles and procedures, learning about, recognising and responding to child abuse.
- c. All staff and volunteers are required to participate in regular training on child protection issues. A record will be kept to ensure all staff and volunteers have received training.
- d. There will be specific training on acceptable and unacceptable sharing of information on children and respecting children's rights and privacy.

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- e. Where possible, children benefiting from MCT services will be orientated on all relevant aspects of the child protection policy and procedures. This should include ensuring children know how to protect themselves, what behaviour to expect from personnel and each other, and when and how to speak out if they feel uncomfortable.

2. **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

All MCT staff and volunteers should:

- Treat all children and young people with dignity and respect befitting their age.
- Watch language, tone of voice and body language.
- Manage difficult behaviour displayed by young people in a positive way, without physical punishment.
- Encourage and respect children's voices and views.
- Be inclusive and involve all children without selection or exclusion on the basis of gender, disability, ethnicity, religion or any other status.
- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse (e.g. children bullying, discriminating against, victimising or abusing children).
- Develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (e.g. for projects based near water, heavy road traffic, railway lines).
- Avoid placing themselves in a compromising or vulnerable position when meeting with children (e.g. being alone with a child in any circumstances which might potentially be questioned by others).
- Meet with a child in a central, public location whenever possible.
- Immediately report the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation to the designated Child Protection Officer.
- Report suspected or alleged abuse to the designated Child Protection Officer as per the child protection policy.

MCT staff and volunteers should not:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault a child.
- Use language that will mentally or emotionally abuse any child.
- Act in any way that intends to embarrass shame, humiliate, or degrade a child.
- Engage in any scape-goating, ridiculing or rejecting of a child or young person.
- Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, political persuasion or any other status.
- Stand aside when they see inappropriate actions inflicted by children on other children because it is frequent and commonplace.

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- Invade the privacy of children when they are showering or toileting - make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be washed thoroughly.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing etc.
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games or allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.
- Engage in inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in 'fun'.
- Allow a young people to involve them in excessive attention-seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.

- Share sleeping accommodation with children. In a residential situation males should never enter female rooms or vice versa except in a situation when a senior is needed and there is no one of the appropriate sex available. In this situation they may enter only if there is someone of the appropriate sex present and they have gained consent to go in.

This code of behaviour should be easily accessible to all staff and volunteers at all times and where possible, should be communicated to the children using the projects.

5.0 GENERAL SUPERVISION

MCT will ensure that:

- a. Children are always supervised when taking part in an MCT project or on MCT premises.
- b. In the 'counselling' situation with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, another adult should know that the interview is taking place and with whom. Where possible, another adult should be in the building / in the vicinity, and the young person should know they are there.
- c. The project co-ordinator keeps a check on visitors and guests whether their visit is by invitation or unsolicited. A person must be designated to accompany all visitors while they are at the project and their details must be recorded by the co-ordinator.
 - a. The project co-ordinator ensures that there are enough adults – both male and female if appropriate – to run activities safely.
 - b. Health and Safety procedures are adhered to at all times and equipment checked on a regular basis by the project co-ordinator.

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6.0 COMMUNICATION ABOUT CHILDREN

- a. All MCT publications and the website that include images and text related to children will not contain the following:
 1. Manipulated or sensationalised text and/or images.
 2. Discriminatory and degrading language.
 3. Images in which children are inappropriately clothed.
 4. Information that could be used to identify the location of the child and cause them to be put at risk.
- b. Photos of children that will be included on the MCT website or any of our publications must be taken with the child's verbal permission.
- c. All written information used for publicity or fundraising will be a balanced portrayal of the child's story with an emphasis on dignity, and as much reference as possible to their social, cultural and economic environment.
- d. All information relating to children is limited to those members of staff and volunteers who need to know and will be treated as confidential.
- e. All written information relating to children (electronic and hard copies) will be stored in a secure and confidential way in accordance with the MCT data management policy.

7.0 DEFINITIONS AND SIGNS OF 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 specify "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.'

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to

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protect.

Some signs of physical abuse

1. Unexplained burns, cuts, bruises, or welts in the shape of an object
2. Bite marks
3. Anti-social behaviour
4. Problems in school
5. Fear of adults
6. Drug or alcohol abuse
7. Self-destructive or suicidal behaviour
8. Depression or poor self-image

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person.

Some signs of emotional abuse

9. Apathy
10. Depression
11. Hostility
12. Drug or alcohol abuse
13. Lack of concentration

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, buggery or oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

Some signs of sexual abuse

14. Inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts
15. Seductiveness
16. Avoidance of things related to sexuality, or rejection of own bodies
17. Nightmares and bedwetting
18. Drastic changes in appetite
19. Over compliance or excessive aggression
20. Fear of a particular person or family member
21. Withdrawal, secretiveness, or depression

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22. Suicidal behaviour
23. Drug or alcohol abuse
24. Self-injury

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Some signs of neglect

25. Unsuitable clothing for weather
26. Being dirty or unwashed
27. Extreme hunger
28. Apparent lack of supervision
29. Child not attending school

8.0 GUIDELINES ON HOW TO RESPOND TO DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

If a child chooses to tell you that they have been abused, they have chosen you because they trust you and they think you will know what to do. One of their major reasons for deciding to tell you at this point is that they want the abuse to stop. They think that you will be able to hear what they have to tell you without being shocked and believe that you will be able to help. Often children's attempts to tell of their abuse are thwarted by adults who dismiss what they are saying without listening properly, or those who do not believe them. So, if a child chooses you, they have done so for a reason.

Listen carefully to what the child tells you without prompting or using any leading questions such as 'Did he say... "Were you at her house?'. If you have to ask any questions, use open questions such as: 'where?', 'when?', 'who?', 'what?', but only as much as will clarify the general picture for you to understand that the child believes s/he has been abused. Do not interrupt the child, and do not ask for additional detail.

Remember the child's own words, and make notes during the meeting or at the first opportunity of what the child has told you using the child's words. Try to remember as much of the detail as possible, so that you can pass it on appropriately.

Do not pass judgement on what the child has told you. Remember that children who are abused are often abused by someone they trust and love. Try not to sound shocked by what the child is telling you, however awful it may sound to you, as this may stop the child from telling any more.

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Reassure the child and discuss with him/her what will happen next. Say that you will need to inform someone else and that someone trained in listening to children who have been abused will need to see him/her to hear more about what has happened. Children often feel responsible for what has happened. Explain that they are not to blame and they have done the right thing to tell you.

In summary

Do:

- treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the child as if you believe what they are saying.
- tell the child they are right to tell you.
- reassure them that they are not to blame.
- be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why.
- tell the child what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – tell your nominated person immediately.
- write down everything said and what was done. Make hand-written notes as the child is talking, or if this is not possible, as soon as possible afterwards make notes of exactly what the child said and the date and time.

Don't:

- make promises you can't keep.
- interrogate the child – it is not your job to carry out an investigation. This will be up to the police and social services.
- cast doubt on what the child has told you.
- say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse.
- do nothing – make sure you tell your nominated child protection co-ordinator immediately – they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

9.0 REPORTING PROCEDURES

9.1 What to do once a child has talked to you about abuse

- a. Fill in the incident record form as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of the interview), writing down exactly what the child said and when he/she said it and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. description of activity). Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand-written notes, even if these have subsequently been typed up.
- b. You must report allegations immediately to the in country child protection co-ordinator.

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- c. If the allegations in any way involve the in country co-ordinator then the report should be made directly to the UK child protection co-ordinator.

9.2 Role of co-ordinators

In the event of allegations or suspicions of abuse, the MCT in country child protection co-ordinator will:

- a. Ensure the immediate safety of the child.
- b. Inform the UK child protection co-ordinator (Chair of MCT) within 24 hours of the allegations being made, and discuss what further action should be taken.
- c. Decide on what further action should be taken using the best interests of the child as the guiding principle.
- d. Under no circumstances attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegations or suspicions of abuse. The role of the co-ordinator is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass it on to the police or child protection services as appropriate.
- e. Inform parent / carer of any action taken if appropriate.
- f. Inform the child of the action that will be taken.
- g. Seek emergency medical attention immediately if this is necessary. Inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.
- h. Provide support for the staff member / volunteer to whom the allegation was made and keep them informed of progress.

If the MCT in country child protection co-ordinator is unavailable, their appointed deputy will carry out the above course of action.

10.0 WHISTLE BLOWING AND RAMIFICATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

What to do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred

Whistle blowing is an important aspect of this policy, whereby staff and volunteers are encouraged to share genuine concerns about a colleague's behaviour in confidence, with the designated child protection co-ordinator.

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Working with young people places staff and volunteers in positions of power. In order to retain the trust of the young people participating in the projects we manage, it is essential to take all responsible steps to ensure this power is exercised responsibly.

Volunteers/staff have the right and responsibility to raise genuinely held concerns about the abuses of power and trust by colleagues. As such whistle blowing is part of the transparent work practices and is not intended to set up mistrust or suspicion.

- a. Concerned staff / volunteers will approach the designated MCT in country child protection co-ordinator in the first instance. The concern will be discussed within 24 hours with the UK child protection co-ordinator.
- b. If the complaint is about the in country child protection co-ordinator it should be discussed directly with the UK child protection co-ordinator.
- c. If the concerned staff member / volunteer requests anonymity, every effort will be made to accommodate this.
- d. The child protection co-ordinator will meet with the concerned staff member / volunteer as soon as possible after the concern is raised, away from work premises if necessary.
- e. MCT will immediately suspend any employee or volunteer who is alleged to have violated the Child Protection Policy, pending the outcome of an investigation.
- f. MCT reserves the right to take any disciplinary action against any employee or volunteer who has been proven guilty in an investigation, which may include reporting the incident to the police.

11.0 SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- a. MCT will ensure that a safe and suitable environment is provided for all users of our services and participants in activities and projects. It does this through rigorous adherence to our health and safety policy and procedures which ensure that the premises, play equipment, play areas, transport arrangements and vehicles are safe and suitable and that there is adequate first aid provision at all events.
- b. A copy of the health and safety policy and procedures are given to all volunteers / staff and a copy is kept on site of each project.

12.0 INSURANCE

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MCT has up to date insurance covering all activities we undertake. The policy and details are held by the MCT secretary.

13.0 CONTACT DETAILS

MCT in country child protection co-ordinator:

Name:
Address:
E-mail:
Mobile:

MCT UK child protection co-ordinator (chair MCT board of trustees):

Name: Dr Christopher Hands
E-mail: christopherhands@gmail.com
Mobile: 00447743659442

Social services:

Police:

UNICEF Morocco contact:

14.0 POLICY REVIEW AND SIGNATURES

The MCT Board of Trustees has overall responsibility to oversee and ensure the implementation of the child protection policy. This policy will be reviewed annually by the MCT trustees, unless there are any relevant changes in child protection law which affect our practice, in which case it will be reviewed sooner. It is the duty of the MCT in country and UK child protection co-ordinators to keep informed of any changes in UK or Moroccan law that are relevant.

Signatures

Signed:

Date:

MCT chair and child protection co-ordinator

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Signed:

Date:

MCT in country child protection co-ordinator

APPENDIX 1

Criteria for NOT appointing staff / volunteers

Should any cautions or convictions be disclosed, a concerning reference received, or concerning attitudes detected at interviews, then the case will be taken to a panel including the designated child protection co-ordinators and another member of the MCT board of trustees.

In particular they may consider any or all of the following:

- Whether the criminal record or other matter revealed is relevant to child protection
- The seriousness of any offences
- The number of any offences
- Whether the offences show a pattern of behaviour that seems to be recurrent and ongoing
- Whether the offences involve violence or threats of violence
- Whether the circumstances surrounding the offences were unique
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have now changed
- What evidence the applicant produces to support the view that they are unlikely to offend again.

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE INCIDENT RECORD

MCT CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT RECORD FORM

Project:	
Your Name:	
Your Position:	

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Child's Name	
Child's address	
Parents/Carers Name and Address:	
Child's Date of Birth: Date and Time of any Incident	
Your Observations:	
Record exactly what the child said and what you said (continue on separate sheet if necessary)	
Action taken so far:	

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Signature (person reporting incident)	
Print Name	
Date and time reported to the child protection co-ordinator:	
External Agencies Contacted (Date & Time) (to be completed by the child protection co-ordinator)	
POLICE Yes/No	If yes – which station: Name and Contact Number: Details of Advice Received:
SOCIAL SERVICES Yes/No	If yes – which: Name and Contact Number: Details of Advice Received:
Other:	Which: Name and Contact Number: Details of Advice Received :

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Signature (Child protection co-ordinator)	
Print Name	
Date:	

APPENDIX 3

Statement of Commitment to the Child-to-Child Child Protection Policy

I, _____, have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in the MCT Child Protection Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing child protection policies and practice while associated with the Moroccan Children's Trust. I further understand that adherence to the MCT Child Protection Policy will involve the following: undergoing a disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (if possible); signing a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent'; declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against me with respect to child protection issues; and providing two character references.

(Print name)

(Job title/role)

(Signature)

(Date)

APPENDIX 4

REFERENCES

Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention. WHO, 1999.

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Are you worried about the safety of a child? NSPCC, 2002.
Developing a Child Protection Policy and Procedures (tool kit). ChildHope , 2009.
www.unicef.org/protection

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