

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



## Maison De Génération Bissiang/Rüschlikon

**Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding and  
Protecting Children in the “Generation House  
Bissiang / Rüschlikon in Cameroon”**

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## SECTION 1

### Introduction

We, the Dubach Family, founder of the “Generation House Bissiang/Rüschlikon” association strive to restore hope, love, care, trust and shelter to vulnerable orphans in Cameroon by creating a sustainable family structure where the child will grow up with all the basic values that are embedded in the natural family. Through a family structure in the Rüschliker house of generations, orphans would receive a home and learn basic Christian values from an early age lacking no parental care for their holistic formation and development.

### Background

In Cameroon, many parents have lost their children due to HIV / AIDS, other illnesses and/or accidents. At the same time, there are many orphans, who grow up without family structures, do not learn basic important values (love, respect, hope, trust, etc.) and therefore have only limited opportunities to ‘survive’ independently later on.

Through a family structure in the Rüschliker’ house of generations, orphans should receive a home and learn basic Christian values from an early age. The association has set itself the task to build a first house for about 10 children and 2 “parents”and grandparents. The aim is that this house can build an economic life of its own and thus be financially independent.

We recognize the fundamental rights of each child and young person to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected especially in the family setting. This right is embedded in the Gospel as well as the civil laws of different nations including Cameroon and Switzerland. This is also enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in various documents of the Roman Catholic Church.

Our Generation House Child Protection Document outlines the guiding principles, policy statement and procedures for the care and protection of children and young people with whom we have contact especially the orphans in our care in our institution. It expresses our commitment to best practice for safeguarding children and young people, for providing a safe environment for them and for responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse.

Our Child Protection Policy and Procedures are intended for all our staff and for co-workers employed in our houses and in the various institutions administered by us. Each one is expected to know and comply with the contents of this document.

#### Guiding principles

- Gospel values
- Marie-Francette and Stefan Dubach-Obe’s vision
- International Law- U.N. Convention on the rights of the child
- Civil Law of the country Cameroon
- Civil Law of the Country SWITZERLAND

### Gospel Values

God’s heart for the orphan is clearly displayed throughout the old and New Testaments. God is the great Protector and loving Father of all children living as

orphans. Psalm 68:5 says, "Father of the fatherless and protector of widows, is God in his holy habitation"

Deuteronomy 10:18 makes us know that all children living as orphans deserve justice, when it says " He ensures that orphans and widows receive justice ... He shows love to foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing"

Psalm 10:14 says "But you God see the trouble of the afflicted, you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless"

Justice is a fundamental part of God's character as we are shown in the Bible. That even one child does not know the love of a family is a great injustice and there are millions of children living in this reality. God promises protection to those who cannot protect themselves and he redeems injustice through His mighty love. He also asks us to do something about it.

Psalm 82: 3 says: Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed"

Deuteronomy 14:28-29 says, "At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that ... the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand"

Some children were brought to Jesus so that he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. The disciples told them not to bother him.

But Jesus said: "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these."

And he put his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.

Matt. 19:13-15

*These scriptural passages inspire us to show God's love, care and shelter to the orphans.*

Like God and Jesus Christ, we must cherish and affirm each child and young person especially orphans as gifts from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all. Orphans are an integral part of our life and mission. They bring life and hope to us. They depend on us. It is the responsibility of all of us to work together to ensure their safety and well-being.

Every staff and all our co-workers have an obligation to ensure that the fundamental rights of the orphan children and young people are respected:

- A right to be respected, nurtured and protected
- A right to an environment free from abuse or neglect
- A right to justice and freedom, they have a right to be listened to and to be heard
- A right to good role models whom they can fully trust, who will respect them and nurture their spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical development

- Those who have suffered abuse within our care should receive a compassionate and just response and should be offered appropriate pastoral and psychological care as they seek to rebuild their lives.

### **Marie-Francette and Stefan Dubach-Obe's Vision**

Marie- Francette and Stefan Dubach Obe have founded a charitable association in Switzerland under the name "Generationenhaus Rüşchlikon in Bissang / Kamerun" ([www.generations-bissiang.ch](http://www.generations-bissiang.ch)). The goal of this association is supporting the establishing and operation of a generationhouse in Bissiang/Cameroon. For this reason they have establish a Cameroonian "sister association", which is registered with the relevant authorities in Cameroon under the name "Generation Hause Bissiang Rushlikon" (Generation-house Bissiang/Rüşchlikon). The Cameroonian association is built in order to provide their dream for the love, protection, education and shelter of vulnerable Cameroonians in Bissiang. All children in care are orphans.

The association has as a goal to be creating new parents, households and family settings for them; and by establishing a natural home for the orphans where father, mother, sister and brother figures will be present. Through the new parents and family setting, the children will come to experience God's love through the care, love and protection of family, thus grow to respect and appreciate their dignity as persons. They saw the family as a place where children who are orphans would be encouraged to develop all their God-given gifts needed to transform themselves, their families and society.

Marie-Francette and Stefan Dubach Obe have a deep compassionate concern for orphaned children. The concept starting in Bissiang may well be a first of it's kind and will hopefully be replicated many times across Cameroon and other African (developing) countries.

### **International Law-The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an International Treaty which was ratified by the General Assembly of the UN on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989 and it became law on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1990. All nations, except few have ratified the treaty. Those nations which have signed and ratified the treaty as well as the Catholic Church worldwide have adopted its terms as the minimum standards to be measured by when caring for children.

The CRC affords children rights to enable them live full lives.

## **PART I**

**Article 1** For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

### **Article 3**

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.
3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform to the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

**Article 12** affords the child a voice in all matters affecting him or her.

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express these views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child either directly or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

### **Article 14**

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

### **Article 16**

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.
2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

**Article 19** provides the child with the right to protection from being hurt or badly treated.

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child 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 who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

**Article 34** gives the child right to protection from sexual harm.

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- a. The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- b. The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- c. The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

In adopting the Treaty the Catholic Church and the jurisdiction of the other nations have accepted to honor the rights of every child as outlined in it.

#### **CAMEROON CIVIL LAW**

**Sections 344, 345, 346 and 360** deal with the protection of children from sexual abuse and the sanctions meted out if this abuse takes place. The information in these sections has already been mentioned in Articles 12, 19 and 34 in the U N Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Cameroon Constitution (18<sup>th</sup> January 1996) states in the preamble:

“Primary school education is compulsory for every child and there is no discrimination of sexes “.

The Cameroon Government through the Minister of National Education prohibits corporal punishment on school children.

Chapter five of the Cameroon Penal Code deals with children and the family.

#### **CIVIL LAW OF SWITZERLAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Children’s Rights<sup>1</sup>

Switzerland ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1997<sup>2</sup> and has continued to enhance children's rights ever since<sup>34</sup>. In 2011, the Federal Social Insurance Office began a program to protect youth from violence, and another for the education of and protection from the media. Complementary to this, nationwide

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<sup>1</sup> <http://netzwerk-kinderrechte.ch/index.php?id=123>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/19983207/201406040000/0.107.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20011783/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20022618/index.html>

organisations such as the Pro Juventute Foundation and the Swiss Foundation for Child Protection are active in working with victims of child abuse of many kinds. Internationally, Switzerland is signed to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, which criminalises sexual acts against children in all of its signed countries.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

**We, the “Generation House Bissiang/Rüschlikon” value and encourage the living and growing of orphaned children in a family setting that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional and social development. We recognize the dignity and rights of all orphaned children and are committed to their protection and support.**

**Our organization undertakes to do all in its power to create a safe environment for orphaned children and to ensure their protection from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.**

### **Generation House Bissiang/Rüschlikon is committed to:**

1. Minimising Risks, in order to safeguard the interest of children and young people e.g. formulating a code on how to run safe activities for children taking into account supervision ratios, health and safety issues.
2. Practices that protect children and young people from harm e.g. in Generation House Institutions in which we work we commit ourselves to having proper supervision in place for children while they are under our care.
3. Ensuring that all our co-workers are carefully recruited, selected, trained, retrained for specific roles as necessary, supported and supervised. Their previous moral and social behaviour would be a priority for us.
4. Ensuring that offenders become Accountable for their actions.
5. Working closely with statutory authorities to ensure that all allegations of abuse are dealt with justly and promptly. The steps taken for any allegation will be recorded especially if the allegation takes place in our college.

**This policy will be reviewed regularly- at least every three years.**

The CPP will be displayed in strategic places of Generation House Bissiang/Rüschlikon especially in each household. It will also be available to all stake holders.

## SECTION 2

### Child Abuse - Definitions

**Child:** For the purpose of this Policy, a Child is defined as anyone under the age of eighteen (18). This therefore applies to orphaned children and young people under our care.

**Abuse:** Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that results in actual or potential harm to a child's physical, psychological or emotional health, development, dignity or well-being in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Child Abuse is categorized under five main forms, namely:-

- a) **Physical abuse** is any form of non – accidental physical injury to a child.
- b) **Sexual abuse** is using a child or young person to gratify one's or another's sexual needs and desires. This includes direct or indirect sexual exploitation of children by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in sexual activities of any kind.
- c) **Emotional abuse** is when a child or young person's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. In short, repeatedly rejecting and humiliating or denying children of their worth and rights as human beings usually has adverse effects on their emotional or behavioral development.
- d) **Neglect** is an omission, where a child or young person suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults and medical care and attention.
- e) **Bullying:** This is also a form of abuse. It is repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others.  
Bullying can involve, hitting, teasing or taunting, extortion, racial or tribal, sexual, cyber, excluding an individual from a group, or threatening them.

### How to recognise abuse:

Listed below are a number of indicators. This list is not exhaustive but is a guideline to help establish whether some form of child abuse or exploitation has taken place. Any concerns, however, must be directed to the designated Child Protection person.

### *Emotional Signs of Abuse*

- Sudden under achievement or lack of concentration.
- Inappropriate relationships with Peers and /or adults.

- Changes or aggression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging.
- Depression or extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness.
- Obsessions or phobias.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Chronic running away/stealing/lying.

### ***Indicators of Possible Physical Abuse***

- Any injury inconsistent with explanation given for them.
- An injury to the body in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in games.
- Repeated urinary infection or unexplained tummy pains..
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have a reasonable explanation.
- Infections and/or symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Aggressiveness or being withdrawn.
- Tendency to running away from home and fear of returning home.
- Undue fear of adults.

### ***Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse***

- Any allegations made by a child concerning abuse.
- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging
- Depression or extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness and fearfulness
- Pain in urinating
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Bruises on inner thighs or buttocks
- Stained or bloody underwear

- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behavior
- Engaging in age inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual provocative or seductiveness with adults or peers

### ***Indicators of Neglect***

- Frequent lateness or persistent absence from school or other scheduled activities.
- Inadequate care.
- Exploited and overworked.
- Lack of adequate clothing.
- Lack of proper nourishment and care.

**It should be borne in mind that it is not always easy to determine if a child has been abused or not, from these signs alone-even for the “experts”.**

### **Code of Behaviour and best practice “Generationhouse”**

Generation House has developed Safe Practice Guidelines for the Protection of children and young people. The following procedures are designed to govern our work with children and young people:

- All staff and those assisting the Generation House in our work are familiar with the child protection policy of the organization and are aware of the good practice guidelines and procedures.
- Children and young people involved with our work, and parents of children involved with our work are also informed of our guidelines and procedures.
- The Generation House has appointed a ‘ Child Protection Officer’ to deal with any complaints or issues arising which concern the safety or welfare of any child/young person who attends any events or meetings organized by our institutions or the staff. 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.
- The Generation House has an Anti- Bullying policy (See Appendix4.)
- The Generation House has a Complaints Procedure (See Appendix 2)

These guidelines are in place to protect the rights and dignity of children and young people under our care.

## Code of Behaviour for Adults

### *Employees and Co-Workers*

Employees and Co-Workers who have contact with children and young people under Generation House care must:

- a) Treat everyone with respect, recognizing their right to personal privacy, welfare and safety. Value and respect children and young people as individuals, encouraging them and involving them in decision making where appropriate and possible.
- b) Plan and organize events in a manner which reduces risk.
- c) Foster a culture of mutual accountability so that potentially abusive behavior can be challenged.
- d) Help children to develop their own sense of their rights and dignity.
  - Physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances.
  - Verbal abuse of children or telling jokes of a sexual nature must not be done in the presence of children. This is never acceptable.
  - Treat all the children and a young person with equal respect, favoritism is not acceptable. A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular child. Staff or volunteers should not meet with children alone, without parents or guardians being present, outside the set program.
  - They must not engage in or tolerate any behavior – verbal, psychological or physical, that could be construed as bullying or abusive.
  - Alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used while supervising or working with children and young people.
  - Never at any circumstance give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
  - Only age appropriate language and material on media products (such as camera phones, internet and video) and activities can be used when working with children and young people. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable.
  - On no account, should an adult develop sexual relationships with children and young people or initiate inappropriate relationships with them.
  - Never use language, give suggestions or advice that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
  - Never act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children and young people.
  - One young person should not be carried alone in a car. If this becomes necessary, in an emergency, it should happen with the full consent and knowledge of the parents/guardians and a senior member of Staff.
  - Where an adult needs to meet with a child/young person alone, the door should be left open and another adult informed of the meeting.

- Do not conduct meetings in private homes or living quarters.
- There should be no unnecessary physical contact between an adult and a young person. Suitable contact is acceptable, only be in response to the needs of the child e.g. when the child is distressed and should be appropriate to the age and development of the child.

### **Best Practice for those with special needs or disabilities and vulnerable children**

Vulnerable children may be defined as:

- Children with special needs or disabilities.
- Children with communication difficulties.
- Children who are homeless.
- Children who are separated from their families, e.g. children in care, refugees.
- Children who are orphans

### **The Responsibility of Parents/Guardians of our orphaned children**

Generation House will take very seriously its responsibilities and obligations with regard to ensuring, to the greatest possible extent, the safety and security of the children and young people in their care. Succeeding in this goal, therefore, requires the partnership and cooperation of the co-opted parents and guardians.

- On no account must parents/guardians abandon their child be it in the school or other settings without providing the adequate care and attention they need. This includes, for example, attending meetings where the welfare of their child or ward is to be discussed.
- They should act upon any concerns or worries the children may have and if necessary contact the relevant *Generation House* Child Protection Officer. Parents/guardians must instruct and educate their children at home on issues related to safety.

### **Code of Behaviour for Children and Young People**

Involve the children/young people (where appropriate) in the drawing up of a Code for their own group. It is important to remember the need for appropriate language depending upon the age group of the children. A copy of this code should be given to the children and young people involved and to their parents/guardians. Staff members and volunteers also must be fully familiar with the Code and how it should be applied. All involved, Children /Young people, Parents/guardians, Staff and Volunteers should be familiar with the Generation House complaints procedure and how to follow it (Appendix 2)

### **Essentials of the code should include:**

- Treat all fellow children and young people with respect, and do not bully them.
- Be fair and do not tell lies about other children or adults.
- Abide by the rules as set out in your school, classes and home etc.
- Respect your school, church premises, areas where activities are held and promote good behaviour.
- Do not spread rumours.
- Do not harm other children or damage property.
- Do not keep unnecessary secrets, especially if they have caused or could cause harm.
- Do not use violence in dealing with others.
- Never cheat.
- Talk to the person in charge if you have a problem of any kind.
- Do not use or bring any dangerous substances or instruments to the church or school or wherever you may be.

### **Events, Meetings and Trips away from home**

#### **Events and Meetings**

The following information/documentation must be supplied to Generation House in relation to each child/young person attending the event/meeting:

1. A Parental Consent form is required; alternatively a consent form from the respective governmental authority that the child can be looked after at the Generation House.
2. Contact details for the family/guardians, including emergency contact numbers Information relating to any special needs which the child or young person may have in terms of access, diet, language assistance, etc. and all medical Information which could be relevant;
3. A clear agreement should be made with parents and guardians (or the relevant governmental authority) regarding the taking of photographs, computer images and the making of video recordings of children or young people who are involved in our activities or events. Agreement should be reached on for what purpose, and where such images may be displayed.

#### **Records**

1. It is necessary to keep a written record of all supervisors' employees, volunteers and those involved in any way, at events and trips away from home under the care of **Generation House**.

2. There must be a clear system for recording any accidents or incidents when the child is in our care and also a system of registration and departure.

There should be an appropriate ratio of adults to young people depending upon the particular situation.

All adults working with the young people will received have police clearance.

All the young people, children parents/guardians, staff and volunteers should have a copy of our Complaints Procedure (Appendix 2) and be familiar with the necessary steps to make a complaint if they so desire.

N.B. The **Generation House** will make that during its events, the physical surroundings will be safe, comfortable, fully accessible and appropriate for the work being undertaken. All entry and exit points should be well supervised and the staff and volunteers should be aware of First Aid and emergency arrangements. We will have regular health and safety reviews of all our facilities.

### **Trips Away from Home (Day Trips, all overnight stays etc.)**

The above conditions should apply, plus the following:

- All trips need careful advance planning, adequate insurance, provision for safety in regard to transport, facilities, activities and emergencies.
- The written parental consent specifically for each trip and related activities must be obtained well in advance.
- A copy of the itinerary and contact telephone numbers should be made available to parents or guardians.
- Appropriate rules and boundaries are put in place to be kept, in the possibly more relaxed situation of trips away from home
- There must be appropriate, gender, supervision for girls and boys, with provision for appropriate sleeping arrangements. The sleeping arrangements should be separated and supervised by two adults who are of the same sex as the group they are supervising. No adult should share a bedroom with a young person.

**If in an emergency, it becomes necessary for an adult to be in a children's dormitory or bedroom, without another adult being present they should**

**a) Immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility.**

**b) Record the situation officially.**

- There must be adequate and appropriate gender supervision of the girls and boys in places such as changing areas, toilets, showers and swimming pools.

## Dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse

**An allegation of abuse** of a child or young person arises, if it is a direct, specific claim and supported by some sort of evidence.

A **suspicion of abuse** of a child or young person arises if the claim is less direct or specific. In this matter we need to look at reasonable grounds for concern. These would be, the child says she /he was abused, or someone else saw the abuse. Other elements would be unexplained injuries or behaviour, consistent with abuse, and evidence that the child over a period of time the child is suffering emotional or physical neglect.

### When a child or young person discloses abuse:

Where a child or young person discloses abuse to an adult, the following guidelines should be followed;

- Whenever possible a second adult should be present.
- The safety of the child should always be considered to be paramount. If urgent action is required in order to protect the child, then it may be prior to the reporting procedure e.g. If the child needs urgent medical attention, make arrangements to get the child to the nearest health facility and inform the medical personnel of your concerns, making them aware that this is a child protection issue.
- If an allegation is made against a staff, an employee, or co-worker, inform Generation House Child protection officer immediately.
- The allegation **must be recorded in writing**. This will include insofar as is possible, the exact words used by the child or the person making the report. Any recorded information must be kept **confidential** and should be passed on to the appropriate authorities. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or an alleged perpetrator, should be purely on a "need to know" basis. The Organisational Child Protection Officer needs to sign this report.
- *If a child or young person reports abuse to you, **be as calm and natural as possible**. Do not panic. Remember you have been approached because **you are trusted and possibly liked**.*
- Be aware that disclosure can be very difficult for the child.
- **Listen** to what the child has to say. Do not pressurize the child. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own words.
- Be careful when asking questions. **Avoid asking about intimate details** (in the case of abuse of a sexual nature) or suggesting that something else could have happened, other than what you have been told. Keep your questions to a minimum, so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The child must not be led or ideas suggested to her or him during the questioning. Such questions and suggestions could complicate later investigations.
- Assure the child that you believe her/him. Remember false disclosures or allegations are not common.

Do not promise to keep secrets, but that you will inform people who need to know. At the earliest opportunity tell the child that you acknowledge that they have come to you because they trust you and that there are secrets which are not helpful and

should not be kept because they make matters worse. Such secrets hide things that hurt.

- It is important that the adult differentiates in his/her own mind between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child, quite possibly, may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking, what was done to him/her.
- It is important to avoid expressing any judgment on, or anger towards, the alleged perpetrator, while talking with the child.
- It may be necessary to reassure the child that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what was disclosed.
- Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
- Avoid confronting or challenging the alleged person (abuser) directly. Do not rush in to investigate or inform the parents or guardians of the child.

### **When an Adult suspects or witnesses abuse of a Child or young person (See Appendix1)**

- Every employee or staff working with children and young people who suspects that a child in the care of **Generation House** has been abused is obliged to relay their concern to the designated person on Child Protection in the organisation as a matter of urgency.

- In a situation where the child has not been physically abused and the child is in no immediate need of medical services, the Child Protection Officer reports the case to the Social Welfare and Community Development Department. The District Social Worker is usually the person notified. It is her/his responsibility to investigate the case and decide whether the police are to become involved.

- In the case that the child has been physically abused and/or in need of medical treatment, the Regional or organization Child Protection Officer shall assist in ensuring that the child is sent to the appropriate medical treatment center. The Social Welfare and Community Development Department is informed of the suspected or witnessed abuse. This is the responsibility of the medical center but the Child Protection Officer must follow-up and make sure that the appropriate authorities at the social affairs department have been contacted. The District Social Worker is usually the person notified. It is her/his responsibility to investigate the case and decide whether the police are to become involved.

- Remember that at this stage any reported or suspected abuse is an allegation until it is proved or disproved. If necessary the advice of a competent lawyer should be sought.

**In an emergency a report should be made directly to the Cameroon Police.**

When a report on suspected or actual child abuse, is being made, the first priority is always for the safety and welfare of the young person. No young person should be left in an unsafe situation.

Parents/guardians of the child must be informed unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

#### **Information required when making a report**

The information, which is gathered, is put on a standard **Generation House** reporting Form. Should a report be made anonymously, it will be followed up. If an individual is unsure about the case, it could be talked over with the Child Protection Officer or with a **Generation House** worker before making the report official

#### **Confidentiality**

An employee/volunteer should never promise to keep secret, any information which is divulged regarding child abuse. **The young person must be told that this information cannot be kept secret but only those who need to know will be informed.**

The principle of **confidentiality** applies in reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse. The information received must only be shared on a 'need to know' basis and the number of people told should be kept to a minimum.

#### **Recruitment, Training and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers**

A most important element of the protection of young children and young people in our care is the recruitment and training of our personnel. We will observe the following procedure, regardless of whether the applicant is full-time or part time, paid or voluntary, temporary or permanent Staff will be recruited according to the requirements of the law in Cameroon. This includes filling out an Application form attending an interview, normally conducted by two people the applicant providing the names of two referees (not family members) who are contacted and obtaining identity card and if possible Police Clearance.

There should be a supervised probationary period during which ministry there should be training in Generation House Child Protection Policy and Best Practice Guidelines and supervision of their activities. Appointments are made after the successful completion of the probationary period.

All volunteers, part-time staff and permanent Staff should be given a clear definition of their role. All new Staff members should be given a written statement of terms of Employment or Contract. It should contain a clear description of job description etc.

**N.B. Where there is any doubt as to the suitability of the Applicant to work with children or young people the application should be rejected.**

Should there be young people, under the age of 18 years helping in the work of the **Generation House**, they will receive training, suitable to their age and experience, in the **Generation House** Child Protection Policy and The Children's Act, (Act 560).

N.B. These young people may only be involved in the work with or under the supervision of an adult.

**All Staff will be given a copy of the Generation House Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour and will be asked to sign a document certifying that they have read it and agree to abide by its contents and that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable for working with children/young people (see Appendix 6).**

If Generation House are working with Staff or Volunteers from another organization it is necessary to give them a copy of our Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour. Ensure that they sign it, agree to abide by it and that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children. A copy of police clearance (official confirmation of non-conviction) not older than 6 months must also be made available to Generation House before taking up any work and needs to be renewed by the employee thereafter every 18 months at the employees initiative. (Appendix 7)

Those responsible for the drawing up, implementation and monitoring of child protection policies should ensure that all personnel, sisters and lay staff, are inducted into child protection policies and procedures when they begin work within an institution or ministry. All personnel should be provided with an opportunity to regularly update their skills and knowledge. Supervision procedures should be in place for all Staff, including observing from time to time those working with children on their own. This supervision is a support for the Staff helping them with problems or anxieties they may have.

This also enables the organization to appraise their ongoing methods and possibly provide more training for the Staff.

Additional training is provided to those who have responsibility in such areas as recruiting and selecting staff, dealing with complaints, disciplinary processes, managing risk, acting as the Child Protection Officer in the institution or as the Child Protection Officer in a specific institution.

## Dealing with Disruptive or Difficult Behaviour

Parents and Staff who deal directly with children and young people will be given guidance and support in dealing with difficult behaviour. Where instances of disruptive behaviour occur with children/young people, a record must be kept of this where the instance requires the intervention of a worker or volunteer or where the safety and well being of others are at risk. Two workers/volunteers should be present in dealing with the situation. Staff members, who are present at the time, should complete the incident/accident report form (see Appendix 9)

Should any bullying behaviour occur, by children /young people or adults, it will be dealt with, in accordance with our **Generation House** Anti-bullying policy (Appendix 4).

## SECTION 3

### Generation House: Structures for Implementation and Monitoring of Child Protection Policies and Procedures in Cameroon

To keep children safe, policies, procedures and plans are implemented across the Organisation and programs of Generation House.

Policies related to child protection can be developed, but unless they are regularly monitored they are in danger of falling in disuse. Checks must be in place at local country-level and in co-ordination with the sister association in Switzerland to ensure that policies and safe practices are implemented, monitored and audited.

#### It is therefore the responsibility of:

- Director and Administrative officer
- The Child Protection Officers/Local and Regional
- The Child Protection Committee

To ensure that child protection policies are implemented and monitored and audited at all levels throughout the institution of **Generation House** and in each Institution owned and /or managed by the **Generation House**.

People appointed to child protection roles should abide by the highest possible standard of conduct in all aspects of their work including the maintenance of appropriate confidentiality.

### Child Protection Representatives at every Level and Their Roles

#### The Local Child Protector Officer

Each household involved in working with children will have a local Child Protection Officer.

The position is voluntary but the designated person will be provided with appropriate induction, support and training. The role will normally be assumed by an existing number of staff, either a Sister or a lay member of staff.

#### The role of the local child protection officer:

- To promote the safeguarding of children by “raising awareness of what safeguarding” is.
- To disseminate information on safeguarding children
- To ensure that any activities run by or within the institution are done in a manner this ensures the safety and well-being of children involved.
- To keep the issue of safeguarding children high on the agenda of the institution.

- To report concerns or allegations of child abuse that is brought to her/him to the appropriate designated person.
- To know and follow all procedures that are detailed in this **Generation House** document related to concerns, allegations and disclosures and disclosers of child abuse.

**The local child protection officer must not act as an Adviser or a Support person to either the person bringing an allegation or the person against whom the allegation is made. Neither must she/he investigate the matter. The responsibility for this resides with the Regional Child Protection Officer.**

### **The Regional Child Protection Officer**

The Generation House will have a Child Protection Officer. The Child Protection Officer within the country should be widely identified so that everyone knows who to go to with concerns about the safety of a child. The role of the Regional Child Protection Officer should also be widely circulated.

There should be no ambiguity between the role of the Local Child Protection Officer and the Regional Child Protection Officer.

### **The role of the regional child protection officer:**

1. To hear any concerns relating to child protection, including any disclosure or allegations of abuse, and take responsibility for managing the response to that concern, disclosure or allegation from start to finish. This would include:
  - the preliminary internal inquiry
  - referral to civil authorities
  - any subsequent internal investigations  
(see Appendix 1:**PROCEDURES**)
2. To ensure that the person raising the concern, disclosing abuse or those who are implicated in the inquiry are regularly informed of the progress of the inquiry.
3. To carefully record all the steps undertaken in response to a concern or allegation of child abuse.
4. To ensure that supports are put in place for the young person, employees or volunteers should allegations be made.
5. To report concerns and allegations to the Civil Authorities, to the Regional Leader and to escalate from there if necessary.
6. To liaise with and seek advice from professional agencies which are in place to promote child safety such as the Department of Social Welfare. (DSW)
7. To review the policy and procedures of country on child protection on an annual basis, amend as appropriate and ensure that a report on implementing and monitoring and auditing our Child Protection policies, throughout the

Region is prepared for the Regional Child Protection Committee and for onward transmission by the Regional Leader to the organizational Leader.

8. To **ensure** that all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues is **Systematically recorded** and **retained** and **kept securely** under lock and key, with only the Child Protection Officer, the Deputy Child Protection Officer and the Regional Leader having access.

**These records include:**

- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of children/young people while working with the *Generation House* or disclosures, concerns, or allegations of child abuse or complaints re bullying.
  - The follow-up, to the above including informal advice from the DSW, reports to the DSW and informing parents/guardians.
  - All Police Clearance Forms.
  - All Consent forms from Parents or Guardians,
  - Signed acceptance forms of the **Generation House Child Protection Policy by staff members, people on short term contracts, or staff/volunteers from other agencies working on Generation House projects.**
9. To act as resource person for the Region providing support and guidance in all matters relating to Child protection. This would include keeping up to date and undertaking relevant training on child protection policy and practice, in order to ensure that Generation House policy is relevant to our situation.

A Deputy Regional Child Protection Officer is appointed to act when the Child Protection Officer is unable to do so due to unavailability, incapability or conflict of interest.

### **The Regional Child Protection Committee**

**Generation House** will have a Child Protection Committee. The Committee will include the Chief Administrative country head, the Local Ordinary, the Regional Child Protection Officer, Local Child Protection Officer(s), the Social Worker, and a Lawyer.

The responsibilities of the Regional Child Protection Committee include

1. Support and advise the Child Protection Officer in the Region.
2. Ensure that all the Generation House Policies and Procedures for safeguarding and protecting children in Generation House institutions are carried out, including record keeping and systems of accountability.

3. To provide training for all Sisters, employees or volunteers in Generation House Institutions or to ensure that training is provided in all aspects of Child Protection by maintaining an up-to –date audit of training.
4. To ensure that v has available all the necessary information and contact details that Staff, children, parents/guardians or others may need to protect children and to report concerns The Child Protection Committee should meet at least quarterly to monitor and audit all the Child Protection Procedures of Generation House listed above from 1-4 including the response to allegations and suspicions of Child Abuse. Pastoral Care arrangements should also be included i.e. making sure that appropriate Pastoral care is provided to those complaining, their families, accused persons, their families, and fellow workers.

**The role of the Regional Child Protection Committee is focused primarily on creating, maintaining and monitoring safe practices related to children. It is not their role to manage or in any way to interfere in specific instances of suspected or alleged child abuse.**

#### **The Country LEADERSHIP TEAM**

It is the role of the Regional or country Leadership Team to:

- Appoint the Child Protection Officer and Deputy
- Oversee best practice in all aspects of Child Safe-guarding and protection in **Generation House**, in the implementation of all policies and procedures, current practice, confidentiality, record keeping, accountability and appropriate training at all levels.
- Inform the Regional Child Protection Officer immediately upon receipt or notification of an allegation, suspicion or concern from any person about abuse of a child.
- Inform the local authorities of the allegation. (Head of department of social affairs)
- Undertake a risk assessment and ensure that anybody making an allegation is safe from abuse and harassment.
- Co-operate, contribute to and assist in any investigation being undertaken by the civil authorities or the child protection Officer.
- The Regional Leader immediately informs the president of the sister association in Switzerland if an allegation is made against a Sister.

#### **The organizational LEADER**

It is the role of the Leader to:

- To co-operate, contribute to and assist any investigation being undertaken by Civil Authorities or by the Child Protection Officer.

## Generation House – Structures for Implementation of Child Protection Policies

In order to keep children safe in our Institutions, policies, procedures and plans **must be** implemented.

Checks must be in place in **Generation House** to ensure that policies and safe practices are **implemented and monitored**.

Policies related to Child Protection can be developed but unless they are regularly monitored they are in danger of falling into disuse. Implementation and monitoring are essential to putting child protection policies and standards into practice.

**Generation House** process for implementing child protection policies includes:

- Meetings for **all** staff members, professional and non-professional
- Seminars
- On-going training
- Appropriate use of professional agencies
- Reviewing and updating of all policy documents
- 

This will take place at the beginning of each year

**It is the responsibility of-**

- The Director
- The Child Protection Officers/ Household, National and Regional
- The Child Protection Committees

To ensure that child protection policies are implemented and monitored at **all** levels in the organisation.

A report on implementation and monitoring of child protection policies and practices in the institution will be sent annually to the Regional Leader.

### Training and Education

**All staff should be offered training in Child Protection to maintain high standards and good practice.**

At the beginning of each year the Leader of the organisation, will ensure that all personnel, Sisters and lay staff, are inducted into Child Protection Policies and procedures. In each case the Child Protection Officer and Deputies are named and their roles are made clear to all the staff.

Everyone who comes into contact with children have a role to play in their protection. To carry out this role confidently and effectively they need to have the necessary skills and knowledge to keep children safe.

All personnel will be given the opportunity to regularly update their skills and knowledge.

Additional training is provided to those who have responsibility in such areas as recruiting and selecting staff, dealing with complaints, disciplinary processes, managing risk, acting as the Child Protection Officer in the Institution.

## LIST OF APPENDICES

### PROCEDURES AND POLICIES.

- *Appendix 1:  
Generation House Procedure for dealing with suspicions or allegations of child abuse*
- *Appendix 2:  
Generation House Complaints Procedure in relation to working with children/young people*
- *Appendix 3:  
Generation House Policy on Pastoral Care*
- *Appendix 4:  
Generation House Anti Bullying Policy when working with children/young people*

### FORMS

- *Appendix 5:  
Parental/Guardian consent form*
- *Appendix 6:  
Acceptance of Generation House Child Protection Policy*
- *Appendix 7:  
Inter organizational form stating that Police Clearance has been obtained*
- *Appendix 8:  
Incident/accident report form*
- *Appendix 9:  
Reference Form*