



AIMPO's CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Child Protection Policy

Say 'YES WE CAN!' In the best Interest of the Child

As a Civil society Organisation majoring on Indigenous Batwa minorities, children constitute a core majority of aimpo's work and development whose work is partly underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Aimpo is committed to ensuring the fulfillment of children's rights including their rights to protection. Aimpo is committed to protecting children from harm and ensuring children's right to protection under Article 19 of the UNCRC is fully realised. Aimpo takes seriously the responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, Aimpo dissociates itself from those who abuse children from becoming involved with Aimpo and takes stringent measures against any aimpo, or aimpo Managers past or current with traces of having abused a child. Our decisions and actions in response to Child protection concerns and breaches of this policy will be guided by the principle of 'the best interests of the child'.

A. Definitions under the Child Protection Policy

1. In line with the UNCRC, for the purposes of this policy, **a Child** is defined as any person under the age of 18 years (UNCRC Article 1).

2. **Child abuse** is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their well being, dignity and prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

3. **Child protection** is defined in this policy as the responsibilities and preventative and responsive measures and activities that Plan undertakes to protect children ensuring that no Child is subject to Child abuse as a result of their association with us, their contact with Plan Staff, Plan Associates and Plan Visitors and/or their participation in any Plan activity, including our projects and programs.

In addition, it incorporates our responsibility to ensure that where there are concerns over a Child's welfare or where a Child has been subject to Child abuse, actions are taken to address this; concerns are reported and responded to appropriately and in line with the relevant global and local procedures; and incidents are analysed so as to ensure continued learning and growth in the field of organizational child protection.

4. **Aimpo Staff** refers to individuals who receive a regular salary for work in any part of Aimpo's spheres of influence within Rwanda and East African region.

5. **Aimpo Associates** refers to a range of paid and non paid individuals who have committed to work with or support Plan. It includes, among others, members of boards, volunteers, including community volunteers, ; interns; sponsors; researchers; donors, consultants and contractor staff and/or representatives of partner organizations and local governments (when operating in partnership agreement with Aimpo).

6. **Aimpo Visitors** refers to a range of persons who are visiting our programs and may come into contact with children through Aimpo, including journalists, media, researchers, and celebrities .

Aimpo Managers refers to Aimpo Staff who have responsibility for line managing or supervising the work of Aimpo Staff or Aimpo Associates.

B. Scope of the Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection Policy applies to all Aimpo Staff, Associates, Visitors and Managers who must comply with its requirements and understand the sanctions that may be applied for breaches of the policy. It is intended that this policy will set a minimum global standard for all Aimpo Staff, Associates and Visitors. Where required by law or local practices. This commitment will be evidenced through signing the policy.

C. Principles

This policy is informed by a set of principles that are derived from the UNCRC and include:

1. All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
2. Each child has a fundamental right to life, survival and development. Aimpo's child-centered community development approach provides a basis for ensuring the realisation of children's rights to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation.
3. All children should be encouraged to fulfil their potential, and inequality and discrimination should be challenged.

4. Children will be assured the right to express their views freely and this will be given 'due weight' in accordance with their age and level of maturity. We will not discriminate against the child. The child will be treated with respect irrespective of gender, nationality or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, physical or mental health, sexual preference and gender identity, family, socio-economic and cultural background, or any history of conflict with the law.
5. Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children.
6. AIMPO has particular responsibilities to children who come into contact with us. No child must come to harm as a result of their engagement with Aimpo as an indigenous child, a participant in a Aimpo program or as part of any Aimpo fundraising or advocacy campaign.
7. These particular responsibilities extend to those individuals or organisations who are associated with Aimpo. Therefore, **everyone** working for or associated with Aimpo's work must be aware of and adhere to the provisions of this policy.

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D. Aimpo's vision for Child Protection

Aimpo creates safe environments for children in all aspects of its work whether fundraising or program implementation, where children are respected, protected and empowered as their capacities evolve to contribute actively to the development of Child protection measures within Aimpo.

This policy aims to ensure that Aimpo Staff, Associates, Visitors and Managers, as appropriate to their engagement with Aimpo, are skilled, confident, understand, accept and are well supported in meeting their Child protection responsibilities and engage positively with children and communities in ways that enhance the achievement of Aimpo's overall program goals and commitments.

E. Responsibilities for those covered by the scope of the Child Protection Policy

Everyone who works with and engages with Aimpo has a responsibility to ensure that children are protected. The responsibilities detailed below are mandatory for those who fall within the scope of the policy.

Aimpo Staff, Associates, Visitors and Managers must:

- 1.** Never abuse and/or exploit a Child or act/ behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.
- 2.** Report any Child abuse and Child protection concerns they have in accordance with applicable local office procedures and this policy. Aimpo Staff may also use Aimpo's Whistle Blowing policy in this event.
- 3.** Respond to a Child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local office procedures and this policy.
- 4.** Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns or allegations of Child abuse.
- 5.** Contribute to building an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
- 6.** Always treat children in a manner which is respectful of their rights, integrity and dignity, considers their best interests and does not expose them to, or place them at

risk of, harm. For example: when taking images/pictures during visits, interacting with children or generating stories of children, ensure that this is done in a manner consistent with the appropriate Aimpo policies and procedures.

7. Never ask for or accept personal contact details (this includes email, phone numbers, social media contacts, address, webcam, Skype etc) from any Child or family associated or formerly associated with AIMPO'S work or share their own personal contact details with such individuals. [For AIMPO Staff and partner organizations, the exception is where this has been **explicitly authorised** for business purposes in a manner which is in line with local Aimpo policies and procedures, has the consent of the Child's parents or guardian and is supervised by the relevant line or supervising manager].

8. Never disclose, or support the disclosure of, information that identifies sponsored families or children, through any medium, unless that disclosure is in accordance with standard Aimpo policies and procedures and/or has the explicit consent of Aimpo. Media include paper, photographs and social media.

9. Never make any contact with a Child or family members associated with Aimpo's work that is not supervised by a (or another) member of Aimpo Staff. Such contact may include but is not limited to visits and any form of communication via social media, emails and letters.

Aimpo Staff must:

10. Comply with the behaviours detailed in Aimpo's Code of Conduct.

11. Only arrange visits by sponsors to meet with sponsored children in a protected space as chosen by Aimpo Kigali office. This may include in their homes with the consent of the Child's family and on the advice of the senior child protection officer at the Organization.

12. Only provide the personal contact details of sponsors to former sponsored children aged 18 or over (not the other way round) to enable them to make direct contact after the Child's graduation from the sponsorship scheme with the prior approval of the sponsor.

Aimpo Managers

13. All Aimpo Managers must ensure that, whilst engaged with Aimpo, Aimpo Associates sign up to either Aimpo's Code of Conduct or to guidance on appropriate behavior towards children that is appropriate to their engagement with Aimpo and is developed by an Aimpo officer using the Code of Conduct as a guide.

14. All Aimpo Managers must ensure that Aimpo Staff who have reported Child protection concerns or are accused of Child abuse are given appropriate care, support and protection in dealing with all aspects of the case including any safety concerns and potential reprisals which may arise from the incident or from the reporting of such concerns.

1 For certain categories of Aimpo Associates the Code of Conduct requires this

a. Personal Conduct outside Work or Association with AIMPO

Aimpo does not dictate the belief and value systems by which Aimpo Staff, Associates, Visitors and Managers conduct their personal lives. However, actions taken by them out of working hours that are seen to contradict this policy will be considered a violation of

this policy. Page 2 of **AIMPO** Staff, Associates, Visitors and Managers are required to bear in mind the principles of the Child Protection Policy and heighten their awareness of how their behaviour may be perceived both at work and outside work.

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b. Implementation, Monitoring and Sanctions

The Directors and Board members of Aimpo are accountable for this policy and responsible for its implementation.

The monitoring of adherence to this policy is made through the **mandatory** tracking of the Child Protection Policy Implementation Standards and Aimpo's Code of Conduct by all organs of Aimpo.

Breaches of this policy and failure to comply with these responsibilities may incur the following sanctions:

- For Aimpo Staff or Managers - disciplinary action leading to possible dismissal.
- For Aimpo Associates or Visitors - up to and including termination of all relations including contractual and partnership agreements with Aimpo.
- Where relevant - appropriate legal or other such actions.

Where concerns exist about the conduct of Aimpo Staff, Associates, Visitors and Managers in relation to Child protection and/or where there has been a breach of the Child Protection Policy, this will be investigated under this policy by consideration of referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under the Rwandan law ; and/or by Aimpo in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary action for Aimpo Staff and Managers.

Be aware that if a legitimate concern about suspected Child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, appropriate sanctions will be applied in cases of false and malicious accusations of Child abuse.

This policy has been approved by:

Richard Ntakirutimana (signed):

