

Safeguarding policy

Engage disability network is a fellowship of more than 100 organizations and churches working together to make Christian communities inclusive of children and adults with disabilities.

We aim to safeguard the welfare of all children and adults at risk participating in our activities. We do not tolerate any form of abuse, wherever it occurs or whoever is responsible.

Definitions:

The Network adheres to the Indian legislation and Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child's definition of a child as anyone below the age of eighteen years.

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding is defined in Working together to safeguard children (2015) as:

- ❖ protecting from maltreatment
- ❖ preventing impairment of health and development
- ❖ ensuring that the vulnerable child and young adult grows up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- ❖ taking action to enable all to have the best outcomes

Scope of the policy:

The Safeguarding Statement applies to;

- ❖ all staff of the Network
- ❖ interns
- ❖ volunteers
- ❖ Core group and advisory group members

The Safe Guarding Statement applies when working in the Network office and while representing the Network at other venues.

The policy establishes a framework to support staff and volunteers in their practices. Ideally, Network should consider supporting local partner organizations to develop their own policies, code of conduct, and reporting protocols.

Key Principles of the Safeguarding Statement

- ❖ The welfare and best interests of children and vulnerable adults are of paramount importance. The Network is committed to respecting their right to dignity and bodily integrity and to protecting those rights
- ❖ All have equal rights to protection and to have their wellbeing and participation promoted.

- ❖ The Network encourages its member organisations to develop safeguarding policies in line with the legislation.
- ❖ The Network will not knowingly engage with any person, organisation or fund any project that poses a risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults
- ❖ The Network is committed to ensuring that all children and vulnerable adults with whom staff members have contact are treated equally and that all have a right to voice their opinion in matters affecting them.
- ❖ The Network ensures that staff receives appropriate training in safeguarding policy.
- ❖ All staff members, interns and anyone contracted on a consultancy basis to work on projects that involve contact with children and vulnerable adults will be vetted and be required to commit to the safeguarding policy.
- ❖ The Network will raise awareness and influence others on the importance of safeguarding, using our policy and procedures as a way of both highlighting our commitment and also of explaining our values. We will share our policy and procedures with others, and be open to feedback regarding its application and relevance.

Statement of risk:

The Network does not usually work directly with children and vulnerable adults in its day-to-day activities, but does engage with them on an occasional basis as well as liaise with organisations that work directly with them.

The Safeguarding Statement identifies procedures to follow to mitigate risks that may present in the following identified scenarios:

- ❖ Where children and vulnerable adults are working in the Network's office (as volunteers or interns) or they are present in the offices for other reasons
- ❖ Where they are at events in which Network staff, volunteers, interns and core and advisory members participate; and
- ❖ Where allegations/suspicions of abuse made to Network staff by telephone, email, and letter or in person

Preventive action:

Human resources:

- ❖ The Safeguarding Policy applies to all those working with or on behalf of the Engage Network. By agreeing to work with/for the Network, it is implied that the terms and conditions of the Safeguarding Policy have been accepted as a condition of involvement
- ❖ Staff and standing volunteers, as well as partners, communities, families, children and other stakeholders and all those working with/for Network should be made aware of the Safeguarding Policy, and how to report a concern. This should be done in ways that are appropriate and accessible given the context.
- ❖ It is the responsibility of the staff member to ensure that occasional visitors and volunteers are properly briefed and supervised throughout the activities or visit.
- ❖ All occasional volunteers and visitors must be accompanied at all times and in no circumstances should they be left unattended with children and vulnerable adults.
- ❖ In selecting partners, consideration should be made with respect to the potential partner's suitability and track record for working with children and vulnerable adults – including if they have their own safeguarding policy and procedures.
- ❖ In all partnership relations, strong attention must be given to issues related to safeguarding. As good practice, specific reference to safeguarding measures should be included in partnership agreements.
- ❖ Partnerships are an opportunity to raise awareness on the need for institutional policies on safeguarding. Therefore all partners should be given training, guidance and support on the Network's Safeguarding Policy, in particular emphasising the responsibilities that partners have for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The nature of this orientation and training can be determined related to the scope of the work of the partner.

Media and communication:

The rules regarding the use of images by the Network must be observed, namely:

- ❖ Respect the Child Safeguarding Policy and its procedure.
- ❖ Make sure that the safety of the child and vulnerable adult will not be compromised if one disseminates images of his or her home, community or environment.
- ❖ Obtain permission from the child and vulnerable adult and/the person who is responsible for looking after him or her. Where parents and children are illiterate then staff and volunteers should explain the contents of the consent form, and then sign on behalf of the child and parents in their presence, indicating that verbal consent has been given.
- ❖ Ensure that the child and vulnerable adult does not pose in any inappropriate manner

- ❖ Do not take or publish photos of children and vulnerable adults who are completely naked or dressed inappropriately. Images that are exploitative or offensive must not be used.
- ❖ Always respect the person's dignity. Do not represent them as victims (weak, desperate etc.). Images should present them in a 'positive way'. Similarly stories about them should aim to report not only the negative aspects of their lives, but also their strengths rather than sensationalising their experience.
- ❖ When publishing/distributing photos, images, stories etc., personal information must be removed to ensure privacy (i.e. names and addresses must not be included and if necessary other identifying features should also be omitted).

Implementation of activities:

When children and young people are part of any project, service or work undertaken through the Engage network, staff members will complete a written assessment of risk outlining measures to manage any identified risk. This will be done prior to engaging with children and young people (see Appendix).

On all occasions when the Network runs an event involving children, a parental consent form will be forwarded to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child and formal permission will be sought and obtained for their child to attend and participate in the event.

When the Alliance hosts events that involve the participation of children, any supervision of children carried out by Network staff, volunteers and interns will be done at a ratio of no more than five children per adult.

Responsive action:

The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

- ❖ The safety and well-being of the child and vulnerable adult must take priority.
- ❖ All Network staff members have a responsibility to ensure that all allegations and suspicions of abuse are treated seriously and with the utmost professional integrity.

Confidentiality

All staff members are obliged to report any allegation, concern, suspicion or disclosure of abuse or neglect.

- ❖ It is essential that all information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should be shared only on “a need to know basis” in the interests of the safety and welfare of the child and vulnerable adult. The number of people who are informed of the allegation/disclosure must be kept to a minimum.
- ❖ All notes and email correspondence relating to protection concern and reports are kept in electronic form by the Designated Officer and the delegated staff member. No other persons and staff members are permitted to access this information.

Designated Officer:

The Network Chair acts as the Designated Child Protection Officer. The function of the Designated Officer is as follows:

- ❖ Ensure that the Alliance Child Safeguarding Statement is followed.
- ❖ The Designated Officer can delegate responsibility to the appropriate member(s) of staff.
- ❖ The Designated Officer remains responsible to respond to all cases of abuse or neglect reported to the Network. The Designated Officer is responsible for reviewing and updating the Safeguarding Statement and procedures.
- ❖ The Designated Officer acts as a resource person to the staff, providing support and guidance in matters relating to safeguarding.
- ❖ The Designated Officer ensures that all staff members who have access to children have received sufficient training.
- ❖ All notes and email correspondence relating to the report are kept in electronic form by the Designated Officer and the delegated staff member. No other persons and staff members are permitted to access this information. Written records of all reports received (even if the report is vague) must be kept and maintained in a secure and confidential location by the Designated officer.

References:

Child safeguarding statement. 2017. Child Rights Alliance.

https://www.tdh.ch/sites/default/files/955ede1a-c959-4e91-914e-5aa7fb944b28_r_pse_d_pol_en_original_0.pdf

<https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Child-Safeguarding-Guidance-Document.pdf>

http://www.elevationnetworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Safeguarding-Children-Adults-at-Risk_v5.pdf