

The Malawi Association for Christian Support Charitable Incorporated Organisation Safeguarding Policy and Procedures: January 2022

A. Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all trustees and volunteers or anyone representing Malawi Association for Christian Support Charitable Incorporated Organisation (MACS CIO) whether in the UK or overseas.

MACS CIO comes into contact with children and adults at risk through the following activities:

Directly: through the work of our representative in Malawi and the occasional visits of MACS CIO's trustees to Malawi.

Indirectly: through its financial support for schools, individual bursary students, hospitals, churches and community organisations in Malawi.

MACS CIO is committed to protecting children and adults at risk from harm. We take seriously our responsibility to promote safe practices and to protect children and adults at risk from abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we will take positive action to prevent those who commit such abuse from becoming involved with MACS CIO and take stringent measures against any person to whom this policy applies who abuses a child or adult at risk, including reporting to the appropriate authorities. Our decisions and actions in response to safeguarding concerns and breaches of this policy will be guided by the principle of 'the best interests of the child or adult at risk'.

B. Definitions under the Safeguarding Policy

- i. **Child** is defined as any person under the age of 18 years (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 1).
- ii. **Adult at risk** is defined as a person aged 18 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.

This may include a person who:

- is elderly and frail
 - has a mental illness including dementia
 - has a physical or sensory disability
 - has a learning disability
 - has a severe physical illness
 - is a substance misuser
 - is homeless
- iii. **Abuse of a Child or Adult at risk** is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, discrimination, cyber abuse, commercial, criminal or other exploitation and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child or adult at risk. This abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or adult at risk or damages their well-being, dignity and prospect of safe and healthy development.

C. Implementation: We will seek to keep Children and Adults at risk safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Officer for children and adults at risk.
- Adopting safeguarding practices through procedures and a code of conduct for trustees, representatives and volunteers including taking up references for all trustees, representatives and volunteers likely to have contact with children and adults at risk.
- For those representing MACS CIO on visits to Malawi, either as trustees or volunteers, two references and a DBS check will be sought before departure. Appropriate resources are to be allocated for this process.
- Providing effective management of volunteers through supervision, support and training, including outlining what to look for, who to report to and expected response.
- Ensuring that volunteers have read and understood the Safeguarding Policy before going on volunteer visits and have signed to say that they have done so.
- Using our Safeguarding Procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know and involving children, parents, families and carers appropriately.
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely.
- Ensuring that we have effective reporting procedures in place.
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against trustees, representatives and volunteers appropriately.
- Ensuring that our beneficiaries are aware of their Safeguarding responsibilities.

D. Responsibilities of those covered by the scope of this policy

Everyone who works with MACS CIO or a beneficiary organisation as a trustee, representative, employee or volunteer has a responsibility to ensure that children and adults at risk are protected. The responsibilities detailed below are mandatory for those who fall within the scope of this policy and form our code of conduct.

Trustees, representatives, employees and volunteers must:

- Never abuse and/or exploit a child or adult at risk or act/behave in any way that places that person at risk of harm.
- Report any abuse of a child or adult at risk or safeguarding concerns they have in accordance with applicable procedures and this policy.
- Respond to a child or adult at risk who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable procedures and this policy.
- Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of allegations of abuse. Contribute to building an environment where children and adults at risk are respected and encouraged to discuss their Concerns and rights.

- Always treat children and adults at risk 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/photographs during volunteer visits, interacting with children or generating stories of children, ensure that this is done in a manner consistent with the appropriate MACS CIO's policies.
- Never ask for or accept personal contact details (this includes email, phone numbers, social media contacts, address, Skype etc.) from any child or adult at risk or share their own personal contact details with such individuals except where this has been explicitly authorised in a manner which is in line with MACS CIO's policies and procedures and in the case of a child, has the consent of the child's parents or guardian.
- Never disclose, or support the disclosure of, information that identifies a child or adult at risk through any medium (including broadcast, published and digital platforms), unless that disclosure is in accordance with MACS CIO's policies and procedures and/or has the explicit consent of the Safeguarding Officer.
- In the case of a trustee, representative or volunteer working in Malawi, they must not deliberately spend time alone with a child on a one-to-one basis, but when this may happen unintentionally (e.g. walking along the beach/ through a village), they should stay in open, public places.

E. Communications and Training

MACS CIO is committed to making all trustees, representatives and volunteers aware of safeguarding issues and to making every effort to ensure that its partner institutions in Malawi have appropriate policies and training in place.

F. Reporting and Allegations Management

MACS recognizes its duty to report concerns or allegations against its trustees, representatives or volunteers.

In the UK, the Safeguarding Officer acts as a focal point for trustees, representatives and volunteers if they have safeguarding concerns. The concern may arise from observing or discovering harm, suspecting harm, or disclosure by a child or adult at risk. In Malawi local reporting procedures must be followed.

If the concern involves the Safeguarding Officer or the Chair of Trustees, the Vice-Chair will take on the role of the Safeguarding Officer or Chair of Trustees as appropriate.

The Safeguarding Officer decides when to refer a safeguarding concern to the authorities (usually after discussion with the Chair of Trustees). The Safeguarding Officer will gather information and seek advice from our local partner if appropriate, but if there is any doubt about the extent of the concern the Safeguarding Officer will always err on the side of making a referral.

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for:

- ensuring that the safeguarding policy is communicated to everyone involved with MACS and that it is monitored, reviewed and updated
- acting promptly to protect a child or adult at risk
- following MACS CIO's procedures for dealing with allegations or disclosures of abuse
- supporting trustees, representatives and volunteers with their safeguarding responsibilities including providing appropriate training prior to a visit to Malawi

MACS expects everyone involved with its work to report concerns or suspicions promptly to the Safeguarding Officer and maintain a formal record of the concern.

The Safeguarding Officer will discuss the concern in confidence with the Chair of Trustees and consider:

- Does the concern meet our stated understanding of abuse?
- Is the local context fully understood?
- Involving our partner institutions in Malawi
- How the concern should be investigated
- Reporting to an appropriate authority

Incident reports and the Safeguarding Officer's responses and actions will be recorded and stored securely. The Chair of Trustees and the Safeguarding Officer only will have access. Any transfer of information must maintain confidentiality and only be made available to relevant parties. If an allegation is made against a MACS CIO's trustee, representative or volunteer they will be suspended from all activity by the Chair of Trustees and Safeguarding Officer pending an investigation. The process will be confidential and limited to those who need to know.

If the concern involves immediate harm to a child or adult at risk, action must be taken without delay, usually through the Safeguarding Officer. In certain instances, it will be necessary to report concerns to the appropriate external bodies.

The responsibility for investigating allegations of the abuse of a child or adult at risk may rest with the local Police and Social Service Department. The Safeguarding Officer may seek legal advice, the advice of the Social Services or Police in deciding whether a formal referral to the authorities is necessary. If it is decided that external reporting should not take place, then there must be a clear rationale for that decision which should be recorded. The decision not to report in such circumstances should be unanimously approved by the relevant management personnel – the Safeguarding Officer and the Chair of Trustees.

The process leading to decision-making should be well documented and all facts or written allegations and responses kept securely on file, as mentioned above under Section F "Reporting".

H. Monitoring and Sanctions

The Trustee Board of MACS CIO is ultimately accountable for this policy. The Chair of Trustees and Safeguarding Officer are responsible for its implementation. Regular reviews should take place.

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

- For MACS CIO's trustees, representatives – up to and including termination of all relations.
- For MACS CIO's volunteers – up to and including termination of all relations.
- Where relevant – appropriate legal or other such actions.

If a legitimate concern about suspected abuse of a child or adult at risk 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 abuse.

Contact Details

Designated Safeguarding Officer: Name: ...Margaret Campbell.....

Phone: Email:

Chair of Trustees: Name:Tony Cox.....

Phone:Email:

Date of Next Policy Review Jan 2023 *Signed: Margaret M. Campbell.....* Designated Safeguarding Officer