



Introduction:

In all of its programming initiatives and policy frameworks, VITRA places a high priority on the lives of children, particularly as influenced by the overall backdrop of South Sudan. VITRA understands compared to adults, children are comparatively more susceptible to situations including violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect. In order to ensure that children enjoy their fundamental rights to live, grow, be protected, and engage in activities that are necessary for them to reach their full potential as human beings without discrimination, VITRA believes that it is imperative that all of its programs prioritize children by providing essential services like psychosocial support, accessible quality education, improved quality of life, and protection.

Based on this conviction, this policy seeks to offer thorough guidelines on how VITRA's operations and programs are all purposefully designed to protect all children. Therefore, the goal of this policy is to ensure a safe and secure environment for all children participating in VITRA's activities and programs.

Purpose of the Policy:

By implementing preventative measures and accountability measures, this Child Safeguarding Policy ("Policy") aims to ensure that VITRA's programs are created and carried out in the best interests of children. This includes making sure that children are always protected from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect in all of VITRA's programs.

Scope of the Policy:

All VITRA employees and associates, including consultants, suppliers, contractors, and other organizations that may come into contact with VITRA's programs and activities, are required to abide by the rules outlined in this policy. It is the unavoidable duty of all employees and colleagues to promptly report any suspicions of child abuse, exploitation, neglect, or violence.

Commitment to the policy:

According to Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child³ (UNCRC), VITRA is always dedicated to protecting all children from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual violence." Every representative of VITRA has an obligation to ensure the safety and security of any children with whom they come into contact, whether directly or indirectly.

According to Article 3 of the United Nations Child Rights Convention (UNCRC), any action done to protect children will be in the child's best interests.

Types and definitions of Child Abuse:

For clarity, VITRA considers the following types and definitions of child abuse in this policy:

Child abuse: Child abuse is any act which individuals, institutions or processes do, or fail to do, which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of a safe and healthy development into adulthood.

There are five key types of abuse, as per this policy:

1. **Physical Abuse:** When an adult or kid causes actual or potential bodily injury to another person. This could entail physical acts like burning, poisoning, shaking, or beating.

2. **Emotional Abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment that adversely affects a child's emotional development. Movement restrictions, humiliation, demeaning treatment, bullying (including cyberbullying), threats, discrimination, mockery, and other non-physical forms of hostile or excluding
3. **Neglect:** Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/ or psychological needs - which is likely to result in serious impairment in his or her overall healthy development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as well as provide adequate nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions.
4. **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice but to consent to. This may include rape, oral sex, penetration, masturbation, kissing, rubbing and inappropriate touching. Sexual abuse also encompasses the involvement of children in the viewing or production of sexual images, witnessing sexual activities and the encouragement of children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
5. **Exploitation:** This encompasses - but is not limited to commercial and sexual exploitation: Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but not limited to, child labour. Child sexual exploitation is a form of exploitation and sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation or any other material needs (e.g., child prostitution, forced/early children marriage for sexual abuse and the exploitation of and creation and dissemination of sexually explicit videos and pictures)

Policy Compliance:

All employees and associates will be subject to this policy without exception. As a result, VITRA firmly mandates that all of its members follow the guidelines of this policy without exception, and all employees and associates should be aware of their individual and collective obligations to uphold VITRA's professional responsibility of care and protection for children. In order to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal abuse, exploitation, or neglect, they must act in the child's best interests and take all necessary and reasonable precautions.

As per this policy, it is imperative that VITRA ensures the protection of children is a priority in all its work. Drawn from the UN Convention of the Rights of Children, the following principles constitute the building blocks of this policy:

- ✓ Everybody has an obligation to support the care and protection of children.
- ✓ Every kid has an equal right to be shielded from abuse and exploitation.
- ✓ Every child should be encouraged to reach their full potential, and disparities should be addressed.
- ✓ The children that international NGOs work with and their representatives work with have a duty of care.
- ✓ When organizations collaborate with partners, it is their duty to ensure that the children in their programs are protected to the bare minimum.
- ✓ The "Best Interest of the Child" principle ought to be adhered to in all child protection initiatives.

Actions:

The following indicative actions demonstrate the commitment of VITRA to safeguarding and protecting children:

At the Awareness Level: VITRA will make sure that all of its employees, partners, suppliers, and contractors understand the dangers of child abuse, exploitation, and neglect; the applicable local laws; and their duties and obligations to children, including how they should interact with children and what to do if they suspect, witness, or report any concerns regarding a child's safety. Through a range of methods, such as inclusion in induction and/or onboarding, online education sessions, and

mainstreaming into programming tools across sectors, this policy should be shared with all pertinent employees, partners, suppliers, and contractors. This Policy is considered an essential component of all employment contracts, and persons must attest to having read and comprehended it before starting work with VITRA. All employees will be briefed on the policy by VITRA on a regular basis.

At the Prevention Level: All VITRA employees, partners, contractors, and suppliers who deal with minors must adhere to the organization's safeguarding policies. Safeguarding measures include conducting risk analyses of all VITRA programs, ensuring that potential hires do not pose a threat to children by methodically checking with previous employers, having personnel attest that they have not previously harmed children, educating all personnel about child safeguarding, and creating action plans that continuously improve child safeguarding and protection activities.

Additionally, it includes making sure kids are fully involved in decisions that impact them and consistently implementing kid-friendly strategies that are simple for kids to understand and use.

At the Reporting Level: VITRA will make sure that all staff members and partners report any concerns about child abuse, exploitation, violence, or neglect; are aware of and have access to suitable referral channels; and understand what to do in the event that concerns about child abuse, exploitation, violence, or neglect surface.

At the Responding Level: When there are concerns about potential violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect, VITRA will make sure that the right steps are done to help and safeguard children. This entails putting in place efficient investigative procedures, offering survivors support where necessary, and prosecuting individuals responsible.

Key Guiding Principles:

Principle 1: Zero-tolerance of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect of children

The VITRA has a zero-tolerance stance against child abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence. If children are harmed by violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect, there may be disciplinary, civil, or criminal penalties. VITRA will not intentionally interact with anyone who could endanger children, either directly or indirectly.

In addition to making sure that its employees, partners, contractors, and suppliers are aware of their duties and obligations under this policy, VITRA works to reduce the risks of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect related to its programs.

Principle 2: Recognition of the best interests of the child

VITRA is dedicated to protecting children's rights. The child's best interests must always come first in all decisions involving them.

Principle 3: Decisions affecting children need to involve children

In our programming, VITRA will try to include kids in all decisions that have an impact on them. When feasible and suitable, this entails consulting with kids, offering channels for input, and assisting their leadership in creating or delivering programming.

Principle 4: Ensure Child Safe Program Design

VITRA will make sure that there are no inherent risks to children in programs that are not child focused. This includes bodily harm brought on by a failure to adequately consider children's unique needs and vulnerabilities. When creating new programs and treatments, VITRA will equally consider the risks to impacted groups, including the possible risks to children. In order to identify potential hazards to children and create mitigation plans, VITRA is dedicated to reviewing its present programs. In addition to regularly reviewing its programs for any new or developing child safety issues, VITRA is dedicated to mainstreaming child protection into its current programs.

Principle 5: Assess and manage child protection risk and impact

While it is impossible to completely eradicate the danger of child abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence, careful planning and observation can help detect, manage, and lessen the hazards that VITRA's

programs may pose to children. VITRA will do everything within its power to provide surroundings and procedures that ensure children's safety. This entails carrying out a child risk analysis for every program, creating the required instruments, and offering technical assistance and program monitoring.

Principle 6: Procedural fairness

Any claim of a violation of this policy will be quickly evaluated to see if it requires an investigation and raises pertinent concerns. When accusations are validated, a disciplinary procedure will be followed, and necessary action will be taken. To guarantee that individuals accused are given a complete and sufficient chance to defend themselves, due process will be adhered to. VITRA will use a survivor-centred approach throughout the process to guarantee children's protection, privacy, respect, and non-discrimination, and to honour their desires wherever feasible.

When reacting to complaints or accusations of violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect against children, VITRA's suppliers, contractors, and partners are expected to follow this concept. Any agreement or contract may be immediately terminated for noncompliance.

Principle 7: Ensure Child-Safe Recruitment of Staff

A child safeguarding policy must include strong child-safe hiring procedures. VITRA pledges to take all necessary measures to guarantee that volunteers and employees are suitably assessed for any possible threats they might pose to children. This should, at the very least, involve asking staff members who will be working with children behavioral-based questions, obtaining a signed disclosure that a staff member has not been charged with child abuse or exploitation offenses, and performing two verbal reference checks, one from the current or most recent employer. A criminal history check will also be part of this. Alternative steps can be done if a criminal history check is not feasible. The Guidance document contains additional recommendations and a checklist for child-safe recruitment.

Principle 8: Ensure training is provided for all staff

Helping its employees, volunteers, and board members comprehend child rights and safeguarding issues, concepts, and best practices is a priority for VITRA. In addition to offering opportunities for required completion of online child safeguarding trainings on the suggested platforms, this also entails educating new hires about the child safeguarding policy and code of conduct.

Principle 9: Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is essential to safeguarding and SHEA. VITRA is dedicated to maintaining a respectful and private relationship with survivors/complainants and all other participants in an incident management process. Confidentiality violations erode faith in VITRA's complaints handling and safeguarding procedures as well as in the organization itself. When handling matters pertaining to sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, it is especially crucial to maintain confidentiality about people's personal data and information.

To ensure everyone's safety and privacy, every attempt will be taken to uphold and encourage confidentiality from the moment of disclosure until the conclusion of any investigation.

Principle 10: Data Protection

When collecting, storing, or disseminating any information about individuals and child safeguarding (for example, in our communications, fundraising, and incident management strategies), VITRA will make sure that it conforms with both national and international data protection laws. Additionally, VITRA will adhere to the guidelines for preserving incident management data that are in accordance with the Global Safeguarding Standards of IASC child protection guidelines.

Policy Implementation:

Staffs Must Always:

All employees and other representatives have an obligation to report any suspicions or instances of child abuse, exploitation, or sexual harassment. This policy and VITRA's Code of Conduct are broken when someone fails to report to the proper person, and disciplinary action may result. According to

VITRA's survivor-centered approach, people are not required to disclose any experiences they have had.

Staffs Obligations:

- ✓ Make sure their actions are consistent with VITRA's principles, follow this policy and the organization's Code of Conduct, and consistently protect and advance the welfare and rights of children.
- ✓ Encourage and educate everyone they interact with on the job about this policy, paying special attention to the kids, parents, and communities they serve.
- ✓ Inform the proper person or people of any suspicions, worries, or actions that violate this policy. This include, but is not restricted to, any suspicions or instances of child abuse that are investigated by employees, other VITRA's officials, partners, members of the community, and others.
- ✓ Make sure they are aware of their Safeguarding Focal Point and SHEA, who are in charge of providing risk mitigation and advice in accordance with this policy.
- ✓ Confidentiality must be upheld, and issues should not be discussed with coworkers who are not participating in an incident management process, in order to protect everyone's rights.
- ✓ Make sure that every activity they do in their line of employment centers on the rights of children. For instance, doing safeguarding risk assessments and making sure agreement is obtained before shooting any pictures of youngsters.

VITRA's volunteers, Staff, and Board Members must never:

- ✓ Engage in behaviors against children that could be interpreted as exploitative or abusive (physically, emotionally, neglectfully, or sexually).
- ✓ Engage in sexual activity or have sex with someone who is younger than 18 or younger than the local sexual consent age, whichever is higher. Be aware that misjudging the child's age is not a defense.
- ✓ Misuse their position of authority to deny children professional support, treat children better, or act in a way that discriminates against children (e.g., children with disabilities, children whose parents are sex workers).
- ✓ Apply physical discipline, such hitting, or in other ways. Even if it is accepted in the local culture, physical punishment is not permitted as a means of discipline under this policy.
- ✓ Utilize any kind of technology (such as computers, smartphones, or digital cameras) to access, view, produce, download, or disseminate offensive photos of children (such as pornographic images of children) or to exploit, harass, or bully minors.
- ✓ Omit to reveal any convictions or inquiries pertaining to children that they are or have been the subject of.
- ✓ Ignore reporting concerns relating to children.
- ✓ Investigate a suspicion or allegation of child abuse unless tasked to undertake this by a relevant authority.
- ✓ Condone or participate in behaviour towards children which is illegal, unsafe, harmful or abusive in any way or condone or participate in any child related activity which is illegal, exploitative, unsafe or abusive.
- ✓ Make children run errands for financial gain or otherwise or use them to solicit support.
- ✓ Use language towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative or that is intended to shame, humiliate or emotionally abuse.
- ✓ Disempower children: staff should discuss their rights with them, what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards them, and what they can do if they encounter a problem.
- ✓ Promote any form of child labour or recruit children for any labour which is inappropriate to their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at risk of injury.
- ✓ Raise malicious complaints or use the policy for purposes other than what it is intended for

VITRA's Contractors, partners and suppliers

VITRA strictly expects its contractors and partners to:

- ✓ Formally acknowledge and comply with the key principles of this Policy
- ✓ Immediately notify VITRA's concerned officials if any personnel of contractor, partner or suppliers are suspected of, accused of, charged with, arrested for, or convicted of criminal offences relating to violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect of children.
- ✓ Accept that any contract or agreement with VITRA may be immediately terminated when a breach(es) of the above-mentioned key principles is substantiated, and/ or a failure to take appropriate action when a breach of these key principles is discovered, including reporting the allegations the same day the report is made to the contractor or partner.
- ✓ Accept that the VITRA may raise with the contractor, partner or suppliers' issues of compliance and may request audits or other measures to assess compliance; and
- ✓ Ensure best efforts to promote and enhance child safeguarding measures and protective actions amongst those it has engaged to carry out the work. The relevant provisions required for the implementation of the above obligations will be inserted in all contracts and agreements signed by the VITRA
- ✓ Not to be subject to a judgment that has force of Res Judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization or any other illegal activity.
- ✓ To guarantee respect of fundamental rights and not be complicit in human rights abuses, including violence against children.
- ✓ Not to exploit child labour and forced labour and respect the basic social rights and working conditions in the countries involved