

EFSCRJ Child Protection Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect children from harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. EFSCRJ recognizes its duty of care to safeguard all children who engage with or are affected by our work, including in our programs, advocacy, research, and partnerships.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All EFSCRJ staff, trustees, volunteers, consultants, interns, and partners
- All activities involving children, including fieldwork, campaigns, and public engagements

3. Policy Statement

EFSCRJ is committed to upholding the rights and welfare of children as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Children's Act of The Gambia, and other child-related instruments at domestic, regional and international levels. We believe all children have the right to protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation, and to grow in safe and empowering environments.

4. Definitions

- Child:** Any individual under the age of 18.
- Abuse:** All forms of physical, emotional, sexual harm, neglect, or exploitation that results in actual or potential harm.
- Child Protection:** Measures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence affecting children.

5. Principles

EFSCRJ adopts the following child protection principles:

- **Best interests of the child** shall always be the primary consideration.
- **Zero tolerance** to child abuse and exploitation in any form.
- **Prevention first** identifying and reducing risks to children before harm occurs.
- **Participation and respect** for children's views in matters that affect them.
- **Confidentiality** and privacy will be maintained throughout reporting and investigations.

6. Prevention Measures

6.1 Recruitment and Vetting

- i. All staff and affiliates must provide references and criminal background checks where appropriate.
- ii. All contracts include clauses on adherence to child protection policies.

6.2 Code of Conduct

All personnel must:

- i. Never hit, humiliate, or abuse a child.
- ii. Avoid physical contact with children unless appropriate and necessary (e.g., first aid).
- iii. Not spend time alone with a child without another adult present.
- iv. Not take photographs or share a child's image or data without informed consent from a guardian and the child (when age-appropriate).
- v. Always treat children with respect and dignity.

7. Reporting and Response

7.1 Duty to Report

- i. Any suspicion, disclosure, or evidence of child abuse must be reported immediately to the Child Protection Focal Point or the Executive Director.
- ii. All reports will be treated seriously, respectfully, and confidentially.

7.2 Response Procedure

- i. **Initial Report:** Received by designated focal point.
- ii. **Assessment:** Risk and evidence evaluated.
- iii. **Action:** May include internal disciplinary action, support for the child, and/or referral to relevant authorities (e.g., Department of Social Welfare, Police).
- iv. **Documentation:** All steps and findings recorded securely and confidentially.

8. Training and Awareness

- i. All staff and affiliates will receive training on child protection upon recruitment and annually thereafter.
- ii. Awareness campaigns will be run in communities and schools where EFSCRJ works to educate children on their rights and reporting mechanisms.

9. Safe Programming

- i. Risk assessments must be conducted for all child-involving projects.
- ii. Child participation must be informed, voluntary, and safe, with proper consent.

- iii. Children will never be used for political, commercial, or exploitative purposes.

10. Monitoring and Review

- i. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every two years or after a significant incident.
- ii. Regular monitoring and audits of adherence will be carried out by the Child Protection Committee.

11. Sanctions

Violations of this policy may result in:

- i. Disciplinary action (e.g., suspension, dismissal)
 - ii. Termination of contracts or partnerships
 - iii. Reporting to appropriate legal or protective authorities
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