



# **Child Abuse and Vulnerable Population Protection Policy**

**Pothawira (Safe Haven) Christian Mission Organization**



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## Introduction

Pothawira (Safe Haven) Christian Mission Organization is a local faith based Non –Governmental Organization designed to complement government and other stake-holder’s efforts to mitigate the maternal, neonatal and under-five children morbidity and mortality. This is a Christian Missions Organization established to alleviate the afflictions of inflicted women and children through a “holistic approach”. Focusing on both physical and spiritual needs of the targeted population.

## Policy statement

Pothawira (Safe Haven) Christian Mission Organization (herein after referred to as PSH) has a duty of care to safeguard all children from harm. Everyone at PSH are committed partners in the prevention of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and other forms of abuse or neglect of vulnerable populations. It is our duty to seek training and supervision to make us more skilled at detecting and properly reporting suspected abuse or neglect of vulnerable populations. Any concern or suspicion of potential abuse or neglect must be immediately reported to Peter or Emma Maseko, Angela Maseko and on-site school or clinic supervisor. PSH staff and faculty treat vulnerable populations, their families, and the employees and volunteers who work with them with dignity and respect. It is our duty to be vigilant about our own behavior and that of the members of our service teams to insure the diverse and vulnerable populations served by Pothawira and the staff of the community partners we collaborate with be affirmed and respected. It is our duty to be vigilant about our own behavior and that of the members of our service teams to insure, that this standard of conduct is followed. PSH is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone accepts their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children from harm and abuse. PSH has adopted the Malawian Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (2010) and The National Plan of Action for Vulnerable Children in Malawi.

A child in Malawi is defined as a person under the age of 16 (age 18- adopted by PSH to ensure that all children up to age 18 are covered at PSH). The aim of this policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection while in the care of PSH and to allow staff to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues. This policy applies to both real world and the social media environments ( within Malawi).

## General Principles

PSH Child and Vulnerable Population Protection Policy is based on the following set of principles:

- All children are a priority at PSH
- All children have equal rights to protection from all types of abuse
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and swiftly and appropriately.
- Everyone who makes contact with children at PSH has a responsibility to support the care and protection of the children.
- All PSH partners have a responsibility to meet all standards of protection for the children in their partner’s (PSH in this case) organization.



### Scope of the Policy

The Policy applies not only to PSH staff but to ALL who visits PSH. “ALL”, whether international or national, full time, part time, and to those engaged on short and long-term missions, contracts, researchers, volunteers, and board members at PSH. The policy also applies to staff and representatives of partner agencies and any other individuals, groups or organizations who have a formal/contractual relationship with PSH that involves any contract with children (unless it is formally agreed that a partner organization mainly enforce its own child protection policy).

Everyone who visits PSH or its offices in order to make contact with children, must be made aware that this protocol applies to them. PSH expects that all of the above must act in accordance with this policy in both their professional and personal lives.

Safeguarding –	‘looking after’ the welfare of young people in our care
Child Protection –	Protecting children from direct and/or harmful behavior
Young learners –	Students under the age of 18
Child abuse-	anything (physical, emotional, sexual of any kind , mental harm and neglect) that anyone or a process does or fail to do which is directly or indirectly harms or damages the prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood regarding a child at PSH.

### Recruitment, and Assignment of Personnel and Partners

For staff and volunteers at PSH;

- Prior or at the time of issuing any employment contract, all staff and representatives receive and understand this policy.
- The job description of all staff spells out the specific child protection responsibility each of the positions involve which in broad terms include that they fully understand the provisions of the Child Protection Policy, ensure the way they are carrying out their work is not putting children at risk or further risk, and be vigilant about observing possible child abuse/harm in their personal and professional lives.
- Anyone visiting or volunteering will receive a copy of this policy prior to their trip to PSH. They will be sent a copy via email or when they arrive.

### Education and Training in Child Protection

PSH will ensure that opportunities are available to staff and volunteers, as appropriate, to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding to safeguard children including:

- An induction process for all new and existing staff.
- Child protection issues will be included in meetings to discuss issues and to ensure that appropriate education and training is identified.
- PSH is committed to reviewing and updating the education and training offered to all staff of the organization to ensure it is both relevant in the organizational context and strong in relation to child protection.



- Pothawira Child Protection Representative (PCPR) will ensure that all members who require training will take part in Child Protection refresher sessions annually.

*Pothawira Child Protection Representative/s (PCPR) is Angela Maseko (Director). The PCPR will take on the following responsibilities:*

- a) Ensures that all staff sign the Child Protection Policy and consequences of failing to adhere to
- b) Ensuring that the policy is being put into practice
- c) Being the first point of contact for child protection issues
- d) Keeping a record of any concerns expressed about child protection issues (locked and secured)
- e) Contacting the Local Authority, if appropriate.
- f) Ensuring that paid staff, any contractors, and volunteers are given appropriate supervision
- g) Ensuring that everyone involved with the organization is aware of the identity of the Pothawira Child Protection Representative/s
- h) Ensuring that all electronic and paper data about the children are password-protected or stored in a locked cabinet

### Code of Conduct

Child abuse can occur within many situations. All suspicious cases of poor practice must be reported.

All adults and children have a responsibility to treat one another with dignity, respect, sensitivity, and fairness. All behaviour that discriminates, offends or is violent is unacceptable and that complaints will be acted on. Child abuse is classified as 'gross misconduct' as listed in our [Employee Handbook] and will result in terminating their employment or asked to leave if volunteering. Contractors (that fail to adhere by this policy will lead to termination of contracts or agreements (Termination by Default).

Overall, all staff, and visitors shall:

- Immediately report child and vulnerable protection concerns as per the policy
- Respect the children, listen, and encourage, especially any concerns (encouraging their peers to do the same)
- Stop any disagreements between children from escalating
- Be visible at all time
- keep a record of any injury that occurs and give details of any treatment given. [This should be recorded in the incident books provided]

### Communications and Confidentiality of Information Concerning Children

PSH will develop and implement and enforce a set of communication guidelines to safeguard and respect children, which representatives (all staff and all visitors) will abide by.

### Reporting and Reaction Protocol

PSH will develop and implement 'reporting and reaction protocol' guiding principles. PSH will adhere to the guiding principle set in place to consider the best way a staff or visitor of the organization (PSH) witness or suspect any form of child abuse especially physical and sexual abuse of any kind. There is a responsibility to report suspected or disclosed child abuse. **PSH will take immediate action.**



Ramifications of Misconduct

PSH takes child protection seriously. If any staff or volunteer violates the child and vulnerable protection policy, it will result in dismissal (immediately). PSH will act in accordance with the law to safeguard children and to ensure justice is fully adhered to.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Co-founders (Peter and Emma Maseko, Anne Alaniz (Maseko), the PCPR (Angela Maseko- Director and all administrative team) and Board of Directors. All PSH staff and volunteers are asked to read and sign that they have understood the policy. If at any time the policy is revised/updated, staff will be asked to re-sign.

PSH Child Abuse and Vulnerable Population Protection Policy:

Updated and reviewed by : \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by employee/volunteer/visitor : \_\_\_\_\_

Print name : \_\_\_\_\_

Date / review : \_\_\_\_\_