More than Me Child Protection Policy

July/August 2013

More than Me (MTM) centers around educating and protecting children, many of whom have come from backgrounds of abuse and exploitation. MTM is a community development project that is committed to creating a learning environment that safeguards the Rights of the Child and expects its employees to work within the best interests of the child. MTM will take active measures to ensure that this is realized.

This Child Protection Policy is MTM’s Statement of Intent illustrating our determination to protect children from harm. It makes clear to everyone within the organization, and all who come in contact with us, that any form child abuse will not be tolerated and outlines their obligations in protecting the children MTM work with.

Our Vision

To create ‘child-safe’ environments, internally and externally which support the respect, empowerment, education and protection of children to fulfill their potential, alongside Staff who are competent, skilled and understanding of this.

Statement

MTM is committed to ensuring a child friendly space, free of harm, abuse and neglect. We strenuously uphold a workplace whose values are underpinned by the Rights of the Child, and will take positive action against any child abusers from being involved in MTM. Any MTM Staff or Associate who has had claims brought against them of any child abuse will be investigated. Our decision of any investigation will be based on the guideline of being ‘in the best interests of the Child’.

Definitions under the Child Protection Policy

1. A Child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years old.
2. Child Abuse is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

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3. **Child Protection** within the scope of this policy is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that MTM undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.
Scope of the Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to everyone working for and in connection with MTM.

1. **Staff at all levels:** includes those working in the field, at the Academy and the Guesthouse.
2. **MTM Associates:** including all board members, all volunteers, sponsors, consultants and contractors.
3. **MTM Visitors:** such as donors, journalists, media, celebrities who may come in to contact with children through MTM are also bound to this policy.

Responsibilities under the Child Protection Policy

**MTM Staff, Associates and Visitors must:**

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.
2. Report any child abuse and protection concerns they have to MTM. **This is a mandatory requirement for Staff. Failure to so may result disciplinary action.**
3. Respond to a child who may have been abused or neglected to MTM.
4. Cooperate fully and confidentially to any investigation of concerns and allegations.
5. Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
6. Always ask permission from children (and especially in the case of younger children) to take any photos or images of them. Please respect their decision to say no, and please ensure the images are respectful (i.e. they are not suggestively sexual in any way). Stories and images of the children must always be in their best interest.
7. Be aware that where any concerns arise about a MTM staff member being in breach of this Child Protection Policy, their actions will be investigated by MTM and the final decision made in consideration with appropriate Liberian Criminal Law or more specifically the Children’s Act 2011. If a breach has been found by any MTM Staff or Associate, MTM will sever all ties with that person.
8. Be aware that if, a legitimate claim is raised about suspected child abuse, and is proved to be unfound, the reporter will not be prosecuted. Any Staff or Associate that falsely accuses another of any child abuse conduct will face disciplinary action.

Personal Conduct outside Work

Although MTM does not wish to prohibit or restrict its Staff, Associates or Visitors to certain conduct, it must be acknowledged that MTM’s reputation as a child-based development program is dependent not only on its good relations within the community, but also of upholding values of child protection and empowerment. We expect high standards of behavior professionally and personally from our Staff and its Associates. Any unlawful conduct or actions done to undermine these values outside of business hours will not be permitted or tolerated. Such conduct includes but is not limited to: any unlawful activity related to sexual abuse; any other unlawful activity, sexual harassment, physically and/or verbally abusive behavior and public disorderly conduct.

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Staff and Associates are asked to act in accordance with the Child Protection Policy both at work and outside work. Please acknowledge that actions done adversely to this Policy in their personal life can harm MTM's work and upstanding in the community.

SIGNEE: ________________________________________________________________

POSITION AT MTM: ________________________________________________

DATE: ___________________________________