

Vulnerable Persons and Child Protection Policy for the Southern Africa Philanthropy Foundation (SAPF)

Policy Title: Vulnerable Persons and Child Protection Policy

Effective Date: 1 March 2025

Version 1

1. Purpose

This policy ensures the **Southern Africa Philanthropy Foundation (SAPF)** protects vulnerable persons, including children, from abuse, exploitation, or neglect during its programs and activities. It aims to foster a safe environment of dignity, respect, and care.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff members, volunteers, board members, contractors, and anyone affiliated with the Southern Africa Philanthropy Foundation (SAPF) who may interact with vulnerable individuals, particularly children. It encompasses all activities, both in-person and online, within South Africa.

3. Definitions

- **Vulnerable Persons:** Refers to individuals who are at greater risk of harm due to factors such as age, disability, illness, social isolation, or economic disadvantage. In this policy, vulnerable persons include children, elderly persons, individuals with disabilities, and others who may be susceptible to harm or abuse.
- **Child:** Any person under the age of 18 years, in accordance with South African law (Children's Act, 2005).
- **Abuse:** Any action or failure to act that causes harm or risk of harm to an individual, including physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological harm. This includes neglect, exploitation, and other forms of mistreatment.

4. Legal and Ethical Framework

The Southern Africa Philanthropy Foundation (SAPF) follows all applicable national laws, including but not limited to the following:

- **The Children's Act, 2005** (Act No. 38 of 2005)
- **The South African Constitution** (Bill of Rights)
- **The Domestic Violence Act, 1998** (Act No. 116 of 1998)
- **The Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), 2013**
- **The Sexual Offences Act, 2007** (Act No. 32 of 2007)

The organisation is also committed to international standards such as the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** and **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**.

Board of Directors

Jo-Ann Pohl (Chairperson), Gill Bates, Danni Dixon, Joanne Donald, Luyanda Matlala, Kgomotso Mufamadi, Ziaad Suleman

Non-Profit Company (NPC) Registered NPO: 014-831

Registered PBO with 18A Status 930002036

B-BBEE Status: Exempted Micro Enterprise; Level 4 Contributor, Sco Beneficiary Analysis: 91%, 100% SED Recognition

5. Statement of Commitment

The Southern Africa Philanthropy Foundation (SAPF) is committed to:

- Providing a safe and supportive environment for all vulnerable persons, especially children.
- Ensuring that all persons involved in the organisation, whether paid or voluntary, understand their responsibilities regarding the protection of vulnerable persons.
- Preventing all forms of abuse, exploitation, and neglect of vulnerable persons.
- Responding appropriately to any allegations, suspicions, or incidents of abuse in accordance with South African laws and this policy.

6. Principles of Protection

The following principles guide the organisation's approach to vulnerable persons and child protection:

- **Best Interests of the Child:** We consider the best interests of the child in all actions and decisions involving children.
- **Non-Discrimination:** All children and vulnerable persons, regardless of their background, gender, disability, or ethnicity, possess equal rights to protection.
- **Participation:** Children and vulnerable persons will have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their well-being and safety, in a manner appropriate to their age.
- **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Information about vulnerable persons or children, especially in sensitive cases, will be kept confidential and disclosed only when necessary for the person's best interest.

7. Staff and Volunteer Requirements

All staff and volunteers will:

Conduct Background Checks: It is mandatory for all employees, volunteers, board members, and contractors to undergo comprehensive criminal background checks, including investigations into any history of abuse, prior to engaging in work with vulnerable individuals or children.

- **Training and Awareness:** Staff and volunteers must participate in training on child protection and the identification and reporting of abuse, including mandatory refresher courses.
- **Code of Conduct:** All personnel must adhere to a strict code of conduct that prohibits any inappropriate behaviour towards vulnerable persons, including:
 - No physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of any individual.
 - No exploitation or discriminatory practices.
 - No engagement in any form of harassment or coercion.

8. Preventing Abuse and Exploitation

The Southern Africa Philanthropy Foundation (SAPF) will take all reasonable steps to prevent abuse and exploitation by:

- Conducting risk assessments for all programs and activities to identify and mitigate potential risks to vulnerable persons.
- Ensuring that activities align with the appropriate age group and that qualified and responsible staff and volunteers supervise vulnerable individuals.
- Implementing safe recruitment procedures for all personnel, including vetting, interviews, and reference checks.
- Limiting the use of one-on-one contact between staff/volunteers and vulnerable persons, particularly children.
- Educating children and vulnerable persons on their rights, how to report concerns, and where to seek help.

9. Reporting Mechanisms

If there is a suspicion or allegation of abuse, exploitation, or neglect, the following procedures must be followed:

- **Report Immediately:** Any staff member, volunteer, or other concerned individual must immediately report any suspected or actual incidents of abuse or neglect to the designated safeguarding officer or child protection officer.
- **Designated Officer:** [Name of the designated officer] is the appointed safeguarding officer within the organisation. This individual is responsible for responding to reports of abuse and coordinating with authorities.
- **Confidential Reporting Channels:** Reports can be made in person, via telephone, or anonymously through a designated hotline or email address.
- **Investigations:** Allegations of abuse will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and sensitively, ensuring that the privacy and rights of both the complainant and the accused are respected.
- **Referral to Authorities:** If the situation involves criminal activity or the immediate safety of a vulnerable person is at risk, the organisation will contact the relevant authorities, such as local child protection services, the police, or social services.

10. Handling Allegations

In the case of an allegation, the organisation will:

- Take the allegation seriously, ensuring no action is taken that could undermine the investigation.
- Ensure that the accused individual is removed from any contact with vulnerable persons during the investigation, pending the outcome.
- Cooperate fully with local authorities, law enforcement, and other relevant agencies in any investigation.
- Provide support and counselling for the victim and their family, as necessary.

11. Confidentiality

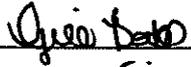
Confidentiality in protection cases is respected, with information shared only on a "need-to-know" basis or as required by law. The victim's protection and privacy are paramount.

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually for effectiveness. Legislative changes, best practices, and operational adjustments will be incorporated. The organisation will also evaluate staff training, reporting mechanisms, and safeguarding procedures to ensure ongoing improvement.

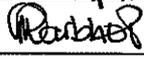
13. Conclusion

The Southern Africa Philanthropy Foundation (SAPF) is committed to protecting vulnerable persons and children from all forms of harm and ensuring that everyone involved in our activities can participate in a safe and supportive environment. By adhering to this policy, we seek to uphold the rights, dignity, and safety of those we serve.

Signed: 

Designation: CEO

Date: 1st of April 2025.

Signed: 

Designation: Finance Manager

Date: 1st April 2025

Board of Directors

Jo-Ann Pohl (Chairperson), Gill Bates, Danni Dixon, Joanne Donald, Luyanda Matlala, Kgomoetso Mufamadi, Ziaed Suleman

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