



Child Protection Policy

Adopted by the Board on 10th June 2020



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1. Introduction

Equilibrium Foundation is a social impact organisation that promotes the balance between disadvantaged and privileged people in the world’s poorest countries.

a. Our Social Vision

Fairer societies and greater social balance between disadvantaged and privileged people in the world’s poorest countries.

b. Our Social Mission

To promote disadvantaged people, multipliers, micro-entrepreneurs, and non-profit organisations from the world’s poorest countries through comprehensible activities in education, cultural and environmental sectors.

c. Our Values

1. Diversity and Equality, 2. Tolerance and Solidarity, 3. Honesty and Transparency, 4. Participation and Collaboration, 5. Courage and Entrepreneurship, 6. Continuous Improvement, 7. Impact and Sustainability.

d. Our Position

Equilibrium Foundation is committed to creating and maintaining a caring and protective environment which promotes its core values, and prevents and addresses child abuse and exploitation. We strongly condemn all forms of child abuse and exploitation, be it within or outside of our organisation, and always respond to any case of proven, alleged or attempted abuse within our sphere of influence according to its nature. Efforts ensure that mechanisms are in place to raise awareness, encourage reporting and ease response. They range from training and counselling to measures such as suspension, dismissal, and legal action.

e. Our Commitment

Equilibrium Foundation recognises that children face the risk of harm and abuse in communities around the world, including the communities in which we work. Equilibrium Foundation’ activities directly serve children in marginalised communities, often unreached by Government safeguarding intervention. Equilibrium Foundation works in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: The best interest of the child is our primary consideration. Every child has the right to develop to his or her full potential, to quality education, participation and non-discrimination. Everybody has the responsibility to protect children from all forms of abuse, abandonment, exploitation, violence and discrimination.

f. Purpose of the Policy

The aim of this policy, is to ensure a robust approach to child protection which is consistently implemented throughout our global activities. This is to ensure that all children participating in Equilibrium Foundation activities are effectively safeguarded, and that Equilibrium Foundation activities do not cause any harm to children.

2. Our Child Protection Principles

a. Definition

The following definitions apply to these principles:

- A child is defined as a person under the age of 18.
- Child abuse includes neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

b. Equilibrium Foundation's Convictions with regard to Child Protection

- Abuse and exploitation of children is never acceptable.
- All children have the right to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- The situation of all children must be improved by strengthening their rights in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- We have made a voluntary commitment to protect children.
- When we work with partners, they are responsible for ensuring that minimum standards of child protection are respected in their activities.

c. Equilibrium Foundation's Obligations to the Protection of Children

Equilibrium Foundation fulfils its voluntary commitment to child protection by the following means:

- Awareness: Equilibrium Foundation ensures that all employees, contractors, volunteers, interns and partners are aware of the problems of abuse and exploitation of children.
- Prevention: Equilibrium Foundation ensures that thanks to awareness and good practices all employees, others and partners minimize the risks for children.
- Reporting: Equilibrium Foundation ensures that all employees, others and partners are aware of the steps to be taken when concerns about child safety arise.
- Response: Equilibrium Foundation ensures that measures are taken to support and protect children when concerns about the possible abuse and exploitation of children arise.

d. Measures for the Implementation of our Obligations

- All employees, contractors, volunteers, interns and partners sign and abide by the agreement to comply with the attached Code of Conduct for Child Protection.
- All employees, contractors, volunteers, interns and partners have access to a copy of Equilibrium Foundation's Child Protection Policy.
- Each partner organisation will have a country-specific child protection reporting procedure that takes into account the local context.
- For employees who come into contact with children, documented criminal records checks are carried out for each country in which the person concerned has lived for at least 12 months and for each country of nationality of the person concerned. Persons concerned must give their consent to a review of their criminal record and should be informed of the purpose for which the resulting police clearance certificate is to be used. In limited cases, where it is impossible to obtain a foreign criminal record, a declaration on oath may be accepted in lieu of a foreign criminal record, setting out the efforts made to obtain a foreign criminal record and disclosing any charges and convictions handed down in connection with the exploitation of children.
- In addition, documented oral reference checks are carried out for employees who have contact with children.
- For the recruitment of positions that involve working with children, there will be specific behaviour-based interview questions that will be included in the interview plan.
- Each briefing of new employees and new partners will include instruction on the Equilibrium Foundation child protection principles and on child protection problems.
- At each workplace, details will be provided on how to report possible abuse and possible exploitation of children, as well as how to report violations of the reporting principles and violations of the Code of Conduct.
- Systems will be established to investigate possible abuse and possible exploitation when reported.
- Misconduct will result in disciplinary action, which may lead to dismissal. If the allegations against an Equilibrium Foundation employee are substantial, the Managing Director of Equilibrium Foundation may, at his own discretion: (i) issue a written warning and/or put the employee on probation, (ii) terminate the employment contract with immediate effect in accordance with the applicable personnel regulations, (iii) take all other measures provided

for in the personnel regulations. If the allegations prove to be unfounded, they shall be deleted from the personnel file.

- Equilibrium Foundation provides training, learning opportunities and support to our partner offices and personnel to ensure that the obligations are met.
- Duty to report - It is the duty of all employees who become aware of violations of this Code and the Principles to report this immediately to a superior. This must be done through the existing reporting channels. If this is not possible, the report must be made to another, senior employee. Failure to report concerns of sexual abuse and exploitation constitutes misconduct and will be considered grounds for disciplinary action.
- Management ensures that all information about violations of this Code and non-compliance is treated with the utmost discretion. Concerns or suspicions regarding a suspected incident involving activity participants or colleagues, whether a major or minor incident, must always be discussed with a supervisor or other senior manager.
- No action will be taken against an employee who raises concerns in good faith. Disciplinary action will be taken against an employee who retaliates against a colleague who raises concerns or otherwise cooperates in an investigation. The same applies to malicious and false reporting of misconduct and failure to cooperate with an investigation.
- Employees may use the Equilibrium Foundation Complaints Procedure to report violations of the Code of Conduct and non-compliance. Employees can find this complaint procedure in the Equilibrium Foundation Knowledge-Management-System (KMS).
- Beneficiaries, employees of partner organisations and other interest partners can use the Equilibrium Foundation Complaint Procedure for themselves. This complaint procedure for beneficiaries, employees of partner organisations and other interest partners can be found in the KMS.

e. [Review of the Code of Conduct](#)

Equilibrium Foundation is aware that both the internal and external environment is changing. These changes may affect the scope and content of this Code of Conduct. For this reason the principles are reviewed every 5 years. The review process has a consultative and participatory character. The responsibility for initiating the process of reviewing the Code of Conduct lies with the Management Team of Equilibrium Foundation. A report on the review will be provided.

3. Equilibrium Foundation's Code of Conduct on Child Protection

Equilibrium Foundation's ability to provide protection and support for children with whom we work depends on the ability of its employees to maintain and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. We, the employees of Equilibrium Foundation, are both personally and collectively responsible for maintaining these standards, setting a good example and creating a working environment that promotes our commitment and transparency in accordance with this Equilibrium Foundation Code of Conduct for Child Protection.

It is recognised that the work of Equilibrium Foundation staff, temporary consultants, volunteers, interns and partner organisations can put Equilibrium Foundation staff, temporary consultants, volunteers, interns and partner organisations in positions of power in relation to children in the communities with which Equilibrium Foundation works. Employees, contractors, volunteers, interns and partners of Equilibrium Foundation are obliged not to abuse this power.

This Code of Conduct serves as a visible guide for Equilibrium Foundation employees, contractual consultants, trainees, volunteers, interns and partner organisations, helping them to make ethical decisions in their professional and sometimes private lives.

The Code of Conduct applies to all Equilibrium Foundation employees, contractual consultants, volunteers, trainees partner organisations who are invited to read and understand the Code of Conduct and commit themselves to its observance by signing it. Any violation of the Code of Conduct is taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary action or dismissal in accordance with the Equilibrium Foundation disciplinary procedure.

All Equilibrium Foundation employees are responsible for encouraging the dissemination of the Code of Conduct, making it known and promoting it. They also play a role in the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Equilibrium Foundation standards.

As an employee / consultant / volunteer / trainee / partner organisations of Equilibrium Foundation I commit myself,

1. to treat all children equally: our employees will not discriminate in any way whatsoever with regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, religion or on any other grounds common forms of discrimination may include making employment or program decisions based on family status, race, gender, religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, birth, sexual orientation, age, disability, or political opinion. I will always strive to protect the rights of children and to act in such a way that their well-being is given the highest priority.

2. to protect children by handling responsibly the information and resources to which I have access due to my employment at Equilibrium Foundation.

- I will act with due diligence in all matters in official business and will not disclose confidential information about a child or other work-related matters in accordance with staff rules and regulations and applicable policies.
- I will never use Equilibrium Foundation resources to exploit or harass children or use material that exploits children;
- If I photograph or film a child for work-related purposes, I will
 - respect local traditions or restrictions on the reproduction of personal images and strive to comply with them;
 - obtain the consent of the child and the child's parents or guardians before I photograph or film a child; this is a written consent or a documented oral consent; I will explain how the photograph or film will be used;
 - for children 13 years and older, the child's consent is sufficient;
 - in case of group photos with more than three children, no individual consent is required for publication;
 - ensure that photos, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner
 - ensure that the child/children are appropriately dressed and not shown in poses that may be considered sexually suggestive;
 - ensure that images are honest representations of context and facts; and
 - ensure that file labels, metadata or text descriptions do not contain identifying information about a child when images are sent electronically or images are published in any form.

3. to prevent, reject and combat all exploitation and abuse of children.

- I pledge not to abuse the power and influence I have over the life and welfare of a child because of my position.
- I will report any abuse, exploitation or violation of the Principles, including violations of this Code of Conduct, by any Equilibrium Foundation employee, consultant, volunteer, intern or partner.

- I immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other consequences of a criminal offence that occurred before or during my cooperation with Equilibrium Foundation and that relate to the exploitation and abuse of children.
- I will not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, degrading or culturally inappropriate.
- I will never request a service or favour from a child in return for protection or help.
- I will never enter into exploitative relationships (sexual, emotional, financial or work related) with a child.
- I will refrain from hiring children for housework or other work that is inappropriate due to their age or stage of development and that interferes with their time for education and leisure or exposes them to a significant risk of injury.
- I will report to my supervisor in writing about the nature and conditions of such employment.
- I will ensure that another adult is present when I work near children wherever possible.
- I will not invite unaccompanied children I work with into my home unless they are at immediate risk of injury or are in physical danger.
- I will not sleep near unattended children I work with unless absolutely necessary, in which case I will seek permission from my supervisor and ensure that another adult is present if possible.
- I will refrain from corporal punishment or disciplinary measures against children.

4. to refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, in activities that violate human rights or in activities that damage the image and interests of Equilibrium Foundation

- I will not support or participate in illegal, exploitative or abusive activities, including, for example, harmful child labour, child pornography and trafficking in people and goods.
- I will not engage in any form of sexual activity or conduct with children under 18, including payment for sexual services or conduct. This applies regardless of the local age of consent, i.e. the local or national laws of the country where I work. Ignorance or misconception about the age of the child is no excuse. Failure to report such a relationship may result in disciplinary action in accordance with Equilibrium Foundation's policies and procedures.

I have received, read and accepted the Child Protection Principles and the Equilibrium Foundation Code of Conduct on Child Protection.

(Name in block letters)

(Place, date)

(Signature)