

## **Blue Ventures Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults**

### 1. Purpose and aim of policy

Blue Ventures (BV) works with coastal communities and partners in Madagascar, Belize, Timor-Leste, Comoros, Mozambique, Tanzania, Indonesia and Kenya. The purpose and aim of this policy is to provide an appropriate safeguarding policy and reporting framework for children and vulnerable adults in our beneficiary communities and to ensure that all BV employees, consultants, volunteers, trustees, partners and other associates are aware of the policy, procedures and reporting.

### 2. Policy statement

This policy has been guided by the standards of the Keeping Children Safe network and demonstrates BV's commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults involved with or impacted by BV's work from harm. The aim of this Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults is to ensure that all those working with Blue Ventures understand that children and vulnerable adults must be safeguarded and not put at risk of harm because of Blue Ventures' contact with, or impact upon them.

The essential elements of BV's Protection Policy include:

- That the welfare of BV's beneficiaries, including children and vulnerable adults, are paramount.
- Children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.
- The policy is approved and endorsed by the Board of Trustees.
- Who the policy applies to all employees and associated people within Blue Ventures (i.e. all trustees, staff, consultants, associates, invited guests and volunteers).
- Blue Ventures shall assume a responsibility to help partners (beneficiary communities and other NGOs or community groups) to meet the minimum requirements on protection.
- Children and parents are informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate.
- All concerns, and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

- A commitment to safe recruitment, selection and vetting, including, but not limited to, a commitment not to hire children and to comply with all local laws in relation to child labour.
- Reference to principles, legislation and guidance that underpin the policy.
- Reference to all associated policies and procedures which promote children's safety and welfare e.g. with regards to: health and safety, anti-bullying, protection of children online, and photography.
- A commitment to assessing and minimising any identified risks to children in our programmes.

### 3. Definitions

**Child** is any person under the age of 18 years, in line with the [UN Convention of the Rights of a Child](#) **Vulnerable adults** are those aged 18 years or more who either: “Identify themselves as unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation” or “Due to their gender, old age or frailty, mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities as well as disasters and conflicts, and are unable or unwilling as a result to identify themselves as vulnerable or subject to abuse, but are deemed at risk.”

### 4. Scope of the protection policy

This Policy is applicable to:

- All BV employees.
- Consultants contracted by BV.
- Invitees of Blue Ventures visiting BV programmes and partner communities.
- Board members.
- Volunteers and interns.

**Each individual, and ultimately their line manager, is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, and in particular relating to reporting obligations.**

5. Code of conduct This code of conduct provides a clear guide of what is and is not acceptable behaviour when BV staff are working with or in contact with children and vulnerable adults. The code of conduct represents a standard of behaviour that we expect our staff to apply in and out of work and to also use as a guide when observing partners and communities.

## 5.1 When working with children

### You **should**:

- Provide an enabling environment for children's personal, physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development.
- Encourage and respect children's voices and views.
- Be inclusive and involve all children without selection or exclusion on the basis of gender, disability, ethnicity, religion or any other status.
- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse (e.g. children bullying, discriminating against, victimising or abusing children).
- Develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children from peer and adult abuse.
- Be aware of high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children and possibilities of discrimination against minors).
- Develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (e.g. for projects based near water).
- Avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position when meeting with children (e.g. being alone with a child in any circumstances which might potentially be questioned by others).
- Meet with a child in a central, public location whenever possible.
- Immediately report the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation to the Blue Ventures safeguarding and reporting committee.
- Report suspected or alleged abuse to the Blue Ventures safeguarding and reporting committee.

### You **should not**:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault a child.
- Use language that will mentally or emotionally abuse any child.
- Act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate, or degrade a child.
- Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, political persuasion or any other status.
- Develop a sexual relationship with a child.

- Invite an unaccompanied child into your home
- Rest or sleep close to unsupervised children.
- Kiss, hug, fondle, rub, or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing, and grooming.
- Encourage any crushes by a child.
- Initiate physical contact (e.g. holding hands) unless initiated by the child.
- Suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind.
- Allow children to engage in sexually provocative behaviour with each other.
- Stand aside when you see inappropriate actions inflicted by children on other children because it is frequent and commonplace.

## 5.2 Contact with unaccompanied children

Blue Ventures staff should try to avoid situations where they are alone with children, especially anywhere they are unlikely to be seen or heard. This is as much to protect them from suspicion as to protect the child.

If an adult can't avoid being alone with a child, then they should take prudent precautions, for example;

- try to move with the child to a place where there are other people;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact;
- if they do have to touch the child, make sure to get their agreement beforehand, and try not to be over-familiar.

## 5.3 Communications about children

All publications, communications and the Blue Ventures website that include images and text related to children will not contain the following:

- Manipulated or sensationalized text and/or images
- Discriminatory and/or degrading language
- Images in which children are inappropriately clothed
- Information that could be used to identify the location of the child and cause them to be

put at risk. Photos of children that will be included on the website or any of our publications or communications must be taken with the parent's verbal permission. In addition, all information relating to children is limited to those members of staff who need to know and will be treated as confidential.

Every person subject to this policy commits to use technology appropriately and never access or disseminate child exploitative material through any medium, including social media.

#### 5.4 When working with vulnerable adults

You **should**:

- Be respectful and professional
- Listen, communicate
- Use common sense; be caring, attentive and aware
- Act in an appropriate manner
- Be sympathetic to their needs
- Be aware of your responsibility
- Be aware of policy and procedures
- Know the appropriate contacts and act appropriately
- Be responsible – report and support
- Constantly review and update all parties – positively feed into policy/procedures

You **should not**:

- Treat as children
- Be aggressive
- Physically restrain
- Do anything of a personal nature they can do for themselves
- Re-enforce negative emotions/behaviours
- Engage in inappropriate behavior
- Place yourself in a vulnerable position

## 6. Suitability of staff working with children and vulnerable adults

Blue Ventures will not employ anyone who has been identified as an unacceptable risk for children.

Managers recruiting staff or managing volunteers working directly with children will be given clear guidance on appropriate recruitment and vetting to support BV's protection policy.

On joining BV, everyone shall receive a copy of the Blue Ventures Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults, in the appropriate language, and are required to agree to a declaration acknowledging that they agree to abide by the policy, see Appendix A.

Some staff and volunteers work and/or communicate directly with children. They may sometimes be solely responsible for groups of children.

These staff and volunteers:

- Are required to ensure that the children they are working with, and their parents or guardians, are made aware of BV's protection policy document.
- Will be subject to additional vetting and assessment of their suitability for working with children. Clearance will be a condition of employment.
- Where formal vetting systems are not available this will involve soliciting information from trusted sources within the local community and detailed references from previous employers. Staff and volunteers may also be required to provide BV with additional information regarding their background. This information will be treated in strict confidence and will not be used for any other purpose.

## 7. Raising concerns and Reporting

Every staff member has a duty to immediately disclose all charges, convictions or other outcomes of an offence related to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, occurred before or during the employee's association with Blue Ventures

It is also everyone's responsibility to report any **potential** or **actual** risk or wrongdoing.

You should communicate your concerns to the Safeguarding and Reporting Committee (report@blueventures.org) using the form provided here. If you do not have access to email and internet you can send a message to the committee via SMS or WhatsApp to +44 07909 525 410.

Full details of the Blue Ventures reporting procedure can be found in the document [Blue\\_Ventures\\_Whistleblowing\\_and\\_Reporting\\_Procedure\\_April\\_2018](#)

#### 8. Consequences of breach of protection policy

If there is a report or allegation of a breach of the protection policy, an investigation conducted by the Safeguarding and Reporting Committee will commence. During the investigation the individual concerned may be suspended from all activity and association with BV pending the committee report and outcome of the investigation. Staff will continue to receive full pay during this time, in line with our disciplinary and grievance procedures.

It should also be noted that failure to report a breach of the protection policy and breaches of confidentiality in the process will be subject to investigation and disciplinary procedures may follow.

Upon investigation, if it comes to light that anyone associated with BV has contravened the protection policy, whether within or outside the context of BV's work, or grossly infringe on the rights of children or vulnerable adults, or criminal in nature, **BV will take immediate disciplinary action and any other action which may be appropriate to the circumstances.** This may include immediate dismissal, termination of employment or contract or termination of the individual's relationship with BV. Depending on the nature, circumstances and location of the case, BV will also consider involving authorities the relevant national and local child protection/welfare agencies, and the police.

#### **Date of next review of Blue Ventures Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults - February 2021.**

Blue Venture is committed to assessing and minimising any identified risks to children in its program and retains the right to remove personnel from any program should they be found to pose a risk to children's safety/wellbeing