

SPONSOR VISITS TO THE ORGANISATION'S PROJECTS

1) In order to ensure that all possible steps are taken to protect sponsored children, their families and communities, from those who may wish to exploit or abuse them, all sponsor visits will be arranged through the organization. Sponsors are encouraged to make their request to the organization at least 8 weeks in advance of the requested visit.

2) The organization's overseas partner / field office is required to refer any sponsor, or friend of a sponsor, attempting to bypass this procedure to the organization's headquarters, and also to report the incident to the organization's headquarters. The sponsor will then be contacted by the organization.

3) On receiving a request to visit a project from a sponsor, the organization will check the sponsor's record. A letter will be sent drawing attention to the visit guidelines outlined in the organization's Sponsorship Handbook.

4) The sponsor will be:

- expected to sign the appropriate Statement of Commitment to the organization's Child Protection Policy as a condition of the visit;
- Expected to sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent' and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues (N.B. only convictions or history that might be considered dangerous to the safety or well-being of children or their families will be considered as reasonable cause to decline sponsorship visits);
- Expected to provide 2 contacts for referees;
- Expected to provide the organization with their passport number;
- Expected to be interviewed by the organization's designated child protection person / Officer to ensure their suitability for the visit on communications about children (including use of images).

5) If a sponsor chooses not to comply with any of the requirements listed above the visit will be cancelled.

6) Sponsor and child details are then forwarded to the national office concerned. Staff from that office would normally respond with permission for the visit.

7) Group sponsor visits will be subject to the same requirements above. Any sponsor wishing to join a group visit must attend a briefing meeting with the organization prior to departure. A Child Protection Officer will be present during these briefings.

8) All visitors to the organization's projects must be advised of behaviour protocols that should reflect national and local sensitivities. Visitors must sign and acknowledgement of receipt and understanding of these protocols as part of their orientation before they visit the child.

9) The organization's partner / field office's rules for visits to sponsored children must be observed. This may require that a sponsor meet with a child in a central location such as the local organization's office.

10) While visiting projects, sponsors must be accompanied by a member of the local organization's staff, and will not normally be allowed to stay overnight. During group visits, when there may be more

sponsors than members of staff to accompany them, child visits must be done in turn. Under no circumstances should a sponsor be allowed to visit a child's home alone.

11) Local staff must inform the organization's headquarters should a sponsor attempt to return, unchaperoned, to a project on a subsequent occasion.

12) Sponsors and sponsored families should not exchange mailing addresses during visits.

13) The organization will retain the right to cancel a sponsor's visit at any time. Local staff must be informed if the organization's staff has **any** suspicions, so that the situation can be monitored.

14) Communities and families participating in sponsorship programmes are advised of the organization's procedures regarding sponsor visits. They are encouraged to report immediately any visit that has not been arranged by the organization's staff or any request from a sponsor that encourages withholding information from the organization's staff or other members of the community.

15) For overseas partners / field offices to be eligible to receive sponsor visits they should undertake to provide the organization with a Sponsor Visit Report following every visit. In the case of group visits the organization will prepare a report. (The visit must be reported in full detail giving both positive and negative information, as the report may have a bearing on future requests). Project staff should be reassured that information contained in reports remains confidential, and is not available to sponsors, and the organization will make clear that details should be included of **any** inappropriate behaviour. Actual or suspected cases of abuse or inappropriate behaviour must be reported immediately to the organization, and appropriate action taken.

This may include criminal investigation and potential severance of the relationship with the organization.

16) In the case of any breach of the above guidelines, the organization should be careful to thoroughly investigate every case by contacting the child and their family, the in-country staff and the sponsor or person visiting. Possible action may include bringing the sponsorship to a close and taking follow-up action with external bodies as appropriate.