

The Child Protection Policy of the International Movement ATD Fourth World¹

Introduction

Since its inception, the International Movement ATD Fourth World has engaged with individuals and families whose confidence has been damaged by a persistent experience of exclusion, marginalization and dependence. The very purpose of ATD Fourth World is to enable people marked by extreme poverty to regain confidence in themselves, to assert their dignity, and to free themselves from the oppression and the violence of extreme poverty.

Throughout its history, ATD Fourth World has therefore developed ways of deepening and cultivating its core principles and ethics, training its members and developing actions which are on-going and which aim, not only to protect, but to promote and empower the people with whom we engage.

To this end, ATD Fourth World also maintains a child protection policy designed to prevent the abuse of minors, which covers five aspects: a code of conduct, compulsory background checks, child protection procedures, up to date training and the implementation guidelines.

This policy represents a minimum standard of protection to be followed in all countries where ATD Fourth World carries out action and for all those who are involved in the management and facilitation of activities organized on behalf of ATD Fourth World. Different countries have different laws governing the protection of children: in each country where ATD Fourth World operates, this policy will adjust in accordance with the laws of that country.

In its actions and activities, ATD Fourth World does not tolerate any abuse against children:

- all children have the right to protection against violence, abuse and exploitation;
- every adult has a responsibility to support and protect children.

What do we mean by child abuse?

A “child” is a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. (Article 1, International Convention on the Rights of the Child - 1989)

According to the United Nations, child abuse is defined as: “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse”. (Article 19, International Convention on the Rights of the Child - 1989)

For a more precise definition of the types of abuse see Appendix 1.

¹ This document by ATD Fourth World International is for all its associated regional and national organizations.

1 – Code of conduct:

This code of conduct concerns people who are in contact, through ATD Fourth World, with children.

Respect for the dignity of persons (adults, young people and children) is an integral part of our principles of action.

Respect for dignity also concerns the protection of children in their relationships with each other, which requires the vigilance of adults around them. The situation of children in their families, for whom the law lays down specific prescriptions are covered sections 3 & 4 of this policy.

A child may also tell us directly (or indirectly) that they are being abused. When this happens, follow the guidelines in Appendix 2 – Dealing with disclosure of child abuse.

Our vigilance is particularly focused on situations that arise within the framework of actions led by ATD Fourth World, on its premises or in public spaces.

Failure to comply with this code of conduct will result in disciplinary measures being taken by ATD Fourth World and, depending on the severity of the misconduct, exclusion from the International Movement ATD Fourth World.

This code of conduct should be applied as follows:

- Apply the same ethical principles that inform all ATD Fourth World programs of action with children and their families, which aim to create a climate of mutual respect and friendship between all, to encourage the equal participation of all;
- Only initiate and participate in recognized ATD Fourth World activities on behalf of ATD Fourth World, and not in your own name. Any action or attitude that creates dependency is potentially harmful and ATD Fourth World trains its members not to succumb to the temptation of excessive charity, which leads to inequality and dependence. ATD Fourth World coordinators will ask anyone who falls into this excess to withdraw from action with families living in extreme poverty;
- Show respect for children, regardless of their social or ethnic background, skin color, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, disability, birth or other status;
- Do not expose children to inappropriate, unwelcome, aggressive, sexually provocative, degrading or culturally inappropriate language or behavior; refrain from inappropriate gestures of affection;
- Refrain from any form of sexual relationship or activity with children, knowing that misunderstanding about the age of the child is no justification;
- Make sure you never isolate yourself with a child and keep the door open in a room where you would be alone (as briefly as possible) with a child;
- Do not invite unaccompanied children to your home unless they are exposed to immediate physical danger and, in this case, inform a team member of this act immediately;
- In the event of an overnight outing or residential activity, never sleep in a room with children without another responsible adult;
- Never view media (in any form whatsoever) representing children who are exploited or subjected to sexual violence, or pornography involving children;

- Refrain from all physical punishment or sanctioning of children;
- In respect of the privacy of individuals, unless permission was received to do so, do not communicate any media (text, recording, photo, video) documenting activities with children, whether by computer or mobile phone, camera, camcorder etc.; audio recordings, photographs and videos documenting action are archived locally by teams or in the archives of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, but in no case should they be distributed publicly in a personal capacity (via social networks, publications or other means). Only group photographs of children and/or photographs obtained with informed written parental consent may be distributed publicly and then only with the authorization of the local ATD Fourth World team coordinator;
- Immediately report to the local ATD Fourth World coordinators any infraction of this policy or code of good conduct, as well as any suspicion of violence committed against children by an employee or a volunteer;
- Immediately inform ATD Fourth World if you are or were subject to an investigation or conviction related to the abuse or exploitation of children prior to or during any period of involvement with ATD Fourth World. No person who has been the subject of an investigation or conviction related to child abuse or exploitation will be allowed to take part in actions that would place them in the presence of children.
- If abuse is disclosed by a child, follow the instructions outlined in Appendix 2.

The code of conduct, as presented in Appendix 3, is to be signed by all ATD Fourth World members, as well as by salaried employees, trainees and volunteers who, through the action they are involved in, may be regularly in the presence of children.

2 – Background checks:

ATD Fourth World has a responsibility regarding its employees and volunteers. We must carry out background checks in order to prevent children coming into contact with those who are known to represent a risk.

For this purpose, we will make a distinction between members of the International Volunteer Corps, members of ATD Fourth World and anyone in charge of any activity with children.

Members of the International Volunteer Corps, including trainees and all those who regularly engage in actions with very poor families and their children will have to produce, from the start of their involvement, references from 3 people who know them and who can attest to their moral integrity. Those responsible for recruitment will:

- ask them to provide the bulletin n ° 3 of their criminal record (for France) or their DBS certificate (for the United Kingdom) or the equivalent for other countries. Each national or regional delegation appoints a person to review these documents and to keep track of the fact that they have been provided. If this document shows a conviction for a child protection offense, the person concerned will not be allowed to participate in the actions of ATD Fourth World.
- to verify that they do not appear on an official register, for criminal or administrative reasons, barring them from jobs related to children, when such registers exist.

Everybody in the above categories will be informed of ATD Fourth World's Child Protection Policy and will sign the code of conduct. Local and national or regional ATD Fourth World coordinators are responsible for obtaining these references and documents.

In addition, new volunteers or employees will not carry out action alone at first but always under the responsibility and supervision of senior members of ATD Fourth World who will verify that their behavior is appropriate. In case of doubts about behavior, those in a supervisory role will refer to the local coordinators of ATD Fourth World (see section 4).

For ATD Fourth World activities such as family holidays, family days, summer street festivals and street libraries, complying with the requirements of this child protection policy is paramount: provision of training on child protection policy, signing the code of good conduct, providing three suitable references and a criminal records check or equivalent.

3 – Systematic training:

ATD Fourth World has strong ethical benchmarks for the protection of vulnerable people, which are shared by those involved in action with children. Teamwork is a principle of action that applies across the board. In addition, actions with children generally take place outdoors to be fully visible and accessible to all, which places the facilitators of these actions under the eyes of parents and the community.

Each member of ATD Fourth World receives training in the founding values of the organisation and regularly participates in the collective monitoring and evaluation of action that enables ongoing reflection and improvement to the way things are done.

In addition, ATD Fourth World ensures training on the theme of child protection is received by all those carrying overall responsibilities for action. This training can be organized internally or externally but with the participation of competent external trainers. The International Training and Development Team ensures that all concerned have received training and it is updated at regular intervals.

All other regular participants receive information about the ATD Fourth World's Child Protection Policy and must sign the code of good conduct before any involvement in any activities.

4 – Protective procedures: how to deal with potential abuse, observed neglect, and allegations or witnessed incidents of abuse?

When you have doubts about behavior or suspicions about potential abuse:

- Do not keep your concern to yourself, raise it as soon as you feel uncomfortable.
- Contact your local ATD Fourth World coordinator or, depending on the situation, the National or Regional Coordinator who will decide on the course of procedure.

The local coordinator or the National or Regional Coordinator will, depending on the situation:

- carefully observe the behavior of the person suspected of child abuse or inappropriate behaviour.
- Meet the person and discuss what is considered inappropriate behavior or suspicions that have been brought forward.
- Stop any activity that would allow proximity to children.

If concerns are confirmed, remove the person from any activity that would allow contact with children and report the situation to the national delegate if it is not already been done.

In the case of observed neglect (see definition in Appendix 1):

Child neglect can result from:

- a failure at a societal level to meet the fundamental rights of a child to adequate housing, food, schooling, family life etc.

The appropriate response would be to defend the rights of the child by holding to account the statutory services responsible for meeting these rights.

- a member of ATD Fourth World who lacks vigilance in regard to safety, for example, during an activity.

The person in charge of the activity must ensure that all volunteers engaged in the activity are aware of the risks and to remind them of their responsibilities. In the event of a serious breach of health and safety, the person found to be negligent must be withdrawn from their role in the activity.

- the family environment of the child.

When we witness, within a family living in poverty, an alarming situation of child neglect, our first responsibility is to seek an honest dialogue with the parents or the extended family, to share our concerns, and make ourselves available to offer more support. If that fails and the dialogue cannot take place (refusal or denial of the parents) or does not induce change and that the concern persists, it is advisable, after reflecting as a team on the situation, to report the concern to the national coordinator who will rely on the usual procedures prescribed by law. For junior members of a team, such as trainees or interns, the responsibility for dialogue with the family lies with their supervisor and they should not attempt to initiate a dialogue by themselves.

When an allegation of abuse has been made or an abusive incident is witnessed:

- Write or have the witness write a precise description of the facts observed
- If it is a child making a disclosure then please follow the guidelines presented in Appendix 2
- Transmit the report to the National or Regional Coordinator (internal reporting)
- Immediately remove the person from any activity involving children; do not provide them with specific details of the allegation and do not reveal the identity of the victim, witness or person who has made the allegation.
- At this point do not try to ascertain the accused's version of events.
- The Regional Coordinator and the International Leadership team must be informed of the allegation or incident and they will then meet the person accused to allow them to respond to the allegation and decide, according to the realities of the country and the seriousness of the facts presented, to either reassign the accused to another mission, or exclude them from the Movement and file a complaint with the relevant legal authorities.
- Those responsible for the final decision must submit a report detailing the steps undertaken and the reasoning behind their decision to the board of directors or administrative council of the

association or body which holds legal responsibility for ATD Fourth World in the country where the incident took place.

- Wherever possible the National Coordinator or the Regional Coordinator must inform the parents or legal guardians of the child concerned that an allegation was made and the steps that have been taken to address it.

Special attention will be given to the child involved to allow them her to recover (see Appendix 2).

5 – Effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy:

Each year, national and local teams review the implementation of the Child Protection Policy as part of their responsibilities and verify that all volunteers and employees have provided the three references required, carried out a criminal record check and have signed the code of conduct.

Every five years, The International Training and Development Team, in conjunction with international Regional Coordinators, evaluate the effectiveness of the Child Protection Policy and update, if necessary, the procedures, reference documents and the code of conduct.

Appendix 1

The different types of child abuse

It is difficult to define the notion of "harm" because, depending on the context and culture, the abuse of children can take many forms. They can be abused within a family, institution, community or place of worship, or online via social media. The abuse of children may be the result of one or more adults or one or more other children.

- **Physical Abuse:** actual or potential physical harm by a third party, adult or child, which can take the form of hitting, smacking, shaking, falls, drowning and burns.
- **Sexual abuse:** Forcing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activities: this includes rape, but also masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It also includes involving children in viewing or producing images of a sexual nature, or observing activities of a sexual nature.
- **Neglect:** Depending on the context, resources and circumstances, neglect refers to the persistent inability to meet the basic physical or psychological needs of a child, which has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. Neglect can result from a weak national economic, social or political context. This includes the inability to properly monitor and protect children from harm and to provide them with adequate nutrition, schooling, cultural development, housing and living conditions.
- **Emotional and psychological abuse:** Abuse that affects a child's psychological development includes movement restriction, degrading acts, humiliation, bullying (including cyberbullying), threats, emotional scaring, discrimination, mockery and other non-physical forms of hostile or damaging treatment.

Appendix 2

Dealing with disclosures of child abuse

When a child comes to talk to you about abuse, it is important to listen to them and react in ways that support and protect them. You have a responsibility to ensure the safety of children.

Types of disclosure

Disclosures can be made directly or indirectly.

Commonly, a disclosure is made indirectly, which means that the child does not share the details of the abuse suffered without being invited to do so, or does so in a roundabout way. For example: "Sometimes my father-in-law prevents me from sleeping."

An allegation can also be disguised, for example: "I have a cousin who is a victim of violence."

In other cases, an allegation can be made through hints or gestures, or even with reference to another child "My friend told me ..."

The child hopes that a parent or caregiver will take action in response to their raising the alarm.

Support the child

If a child discloses abuse, never forget how difficult it is for them to do so. It is hard to hear that a child has been abused and your initial reactions may be one of disbelief or to be shocked or horrified, but it is important to support the child and help them to confide 'what they went through'. Recognize the courage they show in agreeing to speak about it.

When a disclosure is made

- 1. Respect the child by listening to what they have to say and taking it seriously.** Don't show disbelief with your questions or your attitude. Do not question the child's word.
- 2. Provide them with a safe environment to express themselves.** Make sure they have privacy and appropriate surroundings. Avoid showing that you are shocked or horrified. This could prevent the child from continuing. The child needs to trust you. Speak slowly and maintain a calm attitude. Tell the child that they are doing the right thing by telling you about their concerns and that you will do what you can to help them.
- 3. Listen and do not make assumptions.** Listen more than you talk, and avoid giving advice or offering solutions. Do not put words into the child's mouth by assuming you know what they are meaning. Let the child talk at their own pace, do not rush them.
- 4. Do not ask too many questions,** especially leading questions, that is, a question in which you provide a possible answer (examples: Did this or that happen? Were you in school? Your uncle hit you on the leg?). This can be confusing for the child and they may stop responding. Do not ask the child for too many details, it may make it harder for them to talk about the abuse.

Listen to the child, let them explain what happened in their own words. Do not stop them in the

middle of the disclosure to alert someone or do something else. **If the child has not already provided the information, limit yourself to the following four questions:**

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Who did it?

5. Do not make promises. Do not tell the child that you will not repeat what they tell you. The child will be scared about what is going to happen, so tell them what you are going to do (talk to some competent people), what will happen next (you will come back and see them), and who else they will need to speak to (you will bring with you the competent people whom you will introduce to them). This will help the child feel that they have some control over what happens next within the law.

6. Report the exact words. It may be helpful to write down the exact words that the child has said, especially in view of any third party intervention by child protection services.

7. Be supportive of the child's disclosure, without judgment. Do not speak negatively. Even if the child discloses terrible things perpetrated by a family member or friend, the child may still love that person and may not recognize that they have been abused. Reassure the child that they are not at fault and have done nothing wrong.

Do not ask questions that would imply that the child is at fault:

- Why did not you tell me before?
- What were you doing there?
- Why did you not stop him?
- How did you end up in this situation?
- Do you tell the truth?

8. Have an understanding of abuse and neglect. Know the four types of child abuse: physical, psychological, sexual, and neglect.

9. Report any suspicion of child abuse. If you think that a child is being abused, harmed or neglected, inform the National Coordinator immediately. If you do not feel in a position to speak with the National Coordinator, immediately contact the Regional Coordinator or the International Leadership Team. Those with ultimate responsibility will decide the next steps and report to the appropriate authorities. When the report of child abuse is made to the relevant authorities, it is important to have the following information: what happened, when and where it happened, who did it and what is their relationship to the child. You will be asked to give some identifying information such as your name, address, where you work, and how you have been in contact with the child concerned.

Appendix 3

Child protection code of conduct declaration

I, _____, declare that I am responsible for my actions and have read the ATD Fourth World Child Protection Policy document. In taking part in the activities of ATD Fourth World, I commit myself to respect these principles; I understand that I must disclose to the National Coordinator any child safeguarding concerns that I may be aware of when I participate in said activities. I therefore commit myself to adhere to the following:

- Apply the same ethical principles that inform all ATD Fourth World programs of action with children and their families, which aim to create a climate of mutual respect and friendship between all, to encourage the equal participation of all;
- Only initiate and participate in recognized ATD Fourth World activities on behalf of ATD Fourth World, and not in my own name. Any action or attitude that creates dependency is potentially harmful and ATD Fourth World trains its members not to succumb to the temptation of excessive charity, which leads to inequality and dependence. ATD Fourth World coordinators will ask anyone who falls into this excess to withdraw from action with families living in extreme poverty;
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- Refrain from any form of sexual relationship or activity with children, knowing that misunderstanding about the age of the child is no justification;
- Make sure I never isolate myself with a child and always keep the door open in a room where I would be alone (as briefly as possible) with a child;
- Do not invite unaccompanied children to your home unless they are exposed to immediate physical danger and, in this case, inform a team member of this act immediately;
- In the event of an overnight outing or residential activity, never sleep in a room with children without another responsible adult;
- Never view media (in any form whatsoever) representing children who are exploited or subjected to sexual violence, or pornography involving children;
- Refrain from all physical punishment or sanctioning of children;
- In respect of the privacy of individuals, unless permission was received to do so, do not communicate any media (text, recording, photo, video) documenting activities with children, whether by computer or mobile phone, camera, camcorder etc.; audio recordings, photographs and videos documenting action are archived locally by teams or in the archives of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, but in no case should they be distributed publicly in a personal capacity (via social networks, publications or other means). Only group photographs of children and/or photographs obtained with informed written parental

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consent may be distributed publicly and then only with the authorization of the local ATD Fourth World team coordinator;

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- Immediately inform ATD Fourth World if you are or were subject to an investigation or conviction related to the abuse or exploitation of children prior to or during any period of involvement with ATD Fourth World. No person who has been the subject of an investigation or conviction related to child abuse or exploitation will be allowed to take part in actions that would place them in the presence of children.
- If abuse is disclosed to by a child, follow the instructions outlined in Appendix 2.

Signed _____ Dated _____ Location _____