



**PAWI**  
SINCE 1910

# **Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies Child Protection Protocols**



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## Introduction

The *Declaration of The Young Persons of the Caribbean* in Kingston, Jamaica on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2012 stated that “violence against children is a norm or tradition in the region that is being passed on to generations, and therefore drastic preventive actions need to be adopted.”

The *Conference on Combatting Sexual Violence Against Children in the Caribbean* held in Bridgetown, Barbados 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> November, 2012 expressed concern that “efforts to prevent and stop the sexual abuse of children are undermined by a range of factors including deficiencies in the law, lax enforcement of the law, corruption and collusion, theological interpretations, gender norms and power relations, political interference, a culture of secrecy and silence, inadequate public education and sensitization, lack of political will, poor coordination among child protection agencies, and a lack of multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches to identifying and preventing the sexual abuse of children.”<sup>1</sup>

Christian communities are not immune to child abuse as has been repeatedly demonstrated in the global media. The Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (PAWI) is not unique in this respect. It has therefore become necessary for Assemblies to agree on and implement clear protocols for the on-going protection of our families and children.

### Defining Child Protection

All English-speaking Caribbean countries have signed and ratified the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. According to that Convention:

Article 1: “A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”

Article 19.1: “States parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”.

Save the Children defines child protection as “measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children.”

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<sup>1</sup> *The Bridgetown Declaration and Agenda for Action to Combat Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean*. Bridgetown, November 21, 2012.

On its website UNICEF includes this definition of child protection in one of its documents: “A broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of organisations—and individuals associated with those organisations—towards children in their care.”

In Caribbean jurisdictions the overriding objective of the relevant legislation is usually the paramountcy of the welfare of the child.

Abuse happens to children of all ages, from all social backgrounds and ethnic groups. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. The abuse of children can occur in all communities and is most likely to occur within families and by people known to the child.

As far back as 1765 Sir William Blackstone in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* wrote that parents owe their children three duties: “maintenance, protection, and education”.

### **Scripture References**

Jesus was very clear about how He viewed children and their protection.

Matthew 18:10, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 19:14, “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’”<sup>2</sup>

Mark 9:42, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.”

There is also the general injunction for due care of children:

Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

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<sup>2</sup> All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. unless otherwise stated and are used by permission.

The Christian Scriptures also see children as a reward:

Psalms 127:3-5, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate."

PAWI places a very high value on our children. In light of the teachings of our Holy Scriptures children are seen as precious gifts from God entrusted to the care of their parents and family, our community of faith and the society-at-large.

Christians believe each person has a value and dignity which comes from God's creation of male and female in His own image and likeness. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people—including children—as bearing the image of God and therefore we are to protect them from harm as far as humanly possible.

### **Duty of Care**

PAWI, as a community of Christians, has an ethical, legal, spiritual and Biblical responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of children and adolescents in our care whether through Sunday school, junior church, vacation Bible school, uniformed groups or any other children and youth programmes conducted within the PAWI community. "To not do so, makes us accomplices to child ... abuse and contributes to its victims' voicelessness in a way that sanctions their disempowerment, marginalization and the violation of their rights."<sup>3</sup> PAWI must therefore seek to prevent any form of child abuse and protect employees and volunteers from false allegations.

Jesus talked of the Kingdom of God belonging to children. He gave them status, time and respect. A Christian approach to safeguarding children therefore asks both individuals and communities to create a safe environment for them, to act promptly on any complaints made and to care for and to minister appropriately to those who have been abused.

PAWI will seek to ensure the suitability of all persons asked to work with children and youth in all aspects of ministry and all such persons will be required to be knowledgeable about these protocols and their implementation.

All allegations of abuse must be taken seriously, fully considered and properly investigated by the appropriate agencies/authorities. Guilt cannot be presumed as

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<sup>3</sup> Jones, Adele D., Editor. 2013. *Understanding Child Sexual Abuse: Perspectives From The Caribbean*. Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, p.4

there is potential for the abuse of these protocols by someone making a malicious complaint.

PAWI will not impede any criminal, professional or regulatory investigation into the abuse of children within its care but reserves the right to conduct internal investigations regardless of the outcome of any other investigation.

Reports of abuse will be treated with confidentiality. Caribbean governments are moving towards mandatory reporting and wherever such laws are enacted PAWI will have to abide by the legal stipulation to report.

It is recognised that there are differences in law from country to country in dealing with child protection and each PAWI District is strongly advised to be cognizant of relevant law within the nation where they minister.

## **Commitments**

PAWI is committed to:

- ✚ The importance of the welfare of each child and zero tolerance of child abuse.
- ✚ Every child being able to participate in relevant Assembly programmes within a safe environment whatever their age, culture, ability, language, racial origin or religious belief and whether male or female.
- ✚ Caring and nurturing each child through respectful pastoral ministry.
- ✚ Creating an environment which is welcoming, respectful and safe from abuse.
- ✚ Valuing, listening to and respecting children and youth.
- ✚ Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm and degrading treatment and respecting their rights, wishes and feelings.
- ✚ Taking seriously and responding appropriately and without delay to all suspicions and allegations of poor childcare practices and/or abuse.
- ✚ Ensuring that all persons working with children through PAWI's programmes will be recruited with regard to their suitability for these responsibilities and will be provided with guidance and training in good practice and child protection procedures.
- ✚ Reviewing and updating these protocols and principles from time to time.
- ✚ Building relationships with the relevant child protection service in each country where PAWI serves.

# Types of Abuse

**It is important to understand that just because one warning sign of abuse is seen it does not automatically mean that child abuse is taking place. It is essential to look for a pattern of abusive behaviour and warning signs.**

The following facts about abuse are based on research findings and highlight issues relating to the different categories of abuse:

- ◆ Most children are abused by adults they know and trust.
- ◆ The reported cases of child abuse are a small proportion of the cruelty, exploitation and neglect to which children in our society are subjected.
- ◆ Disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse; they are more dependent on intimate care and sometimes less able to tell anyone or escape from abusive situations.
- ◆ Children very seldom make false accusations of abuse, and will often deny the abuse or take back an accusation after they have made it.
- ◆ Children who talk about the abuse fear the consequences of telling—they may think that if things are bad, perhaps they may get worse.
- ◆ Children and young people who are abused can be very good at hiding their unhappiness and distress.
- ◆ Abuse has serious long-term harmful effects on children and young people. If untreated, the effects of abuse on children can be devastating and continue into adulthood and, in some cases, lead to life-long problems.
- ◆ The various child protection services in the Caribbean will usually only remove children from their family homes where there is actual, or risk of, significant harm and if the child is in real danger of further abuse.

## 1. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity between an adult and a child. A child may also be sexually abused by another child. It involves forcing or enticing a child or adolescent to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Most Caribbean countries have established that a person under the age of 16 is not mature enough to give consent to sexual activity. All such activity is therefore against the law and subject to legal sanction in a Court of Law.

There is a belief that when a young person reaches the age of consent they can willingly engage in sexual activities and that a sexual relationship at that age does

not constitute abuse. Mutual consent presumes that the persons involved are on an equal footing with each other so that one person is not pressured by the position or authority of the other person. Where unequal power exists mutual consent may not in fact be a reality.

In 2009 the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean in cooperation with UNICEF did a preliminary study on the *Sexual Practices of Young People Attending Evangelical Churches* in Antigua, St. Lucia and St. Vincent. A significant majority of the 1,076 respondents reported that they were born again, had been baptized in water and had been received into the membership of the local Assembly. Of the total responding, 46.7% indicated that they had been, or currently were, sexually active. Of those who had been/were sexually active 53.5% stated that their first experience of sexual intercourse took place before the age of 16 (an act defined by law as rape) and 27% reported that their first act of sexual intercourse was forced or coerced in some way. Of those who were forced in their first experience of sexual intercourse only 17.5% indicated the other person was a new acquaintance while the remainder identified persons well known to them such as a girlfriend/boyfriend, classmate, extended family member, someone who gave gifts, family friend, neighbour and teacher as the person who forced them to have sexual intercourse.

In a longitudinal study done by UNICEF in the Caribbean, 14% of first formers (ages 11-12) reported having been forced to have sexual intercourse. The same group two years later in Form 3 (ages 13-14) reported 18% of them had by then been forced to have sexual intercourse.

Examples of sexual abuse:

Physical:

- ◆ Fondling or touching a child's genitals.
- ◆ Making a child touch an adult's or other child's genitals, even outside of clothing.
- ◆ Penetration, attempted penetration or any genital-to-genital contact including anal sexual intercourse.
- ◆ Oral contact with genitals involving a child and an adult or older child.
- ◆ Encouraging a child to masturbate or even masturbating the child.
- ◆ Digital penetration (use of fingers to penetrate the vagina).

Non-physical:

- ◆ Indecent exposure or exhibitionism (for example, deliberately displaying genitals for the view of children).
- ◆ Talking to a child about sex for inappropriate reasons, telling sexual stories or tales of sexual exploits.



- ◆ Allowing a child to watch or hear sexual acts or material.
- ◆ Showing pornography or other inappropriate sexual material to a child.
- ◆ Making sexually oriented phone calls to a child.
- ◆ Sending sexually oriented email or text messages (“sexting”) to a child.
- ◆ Making sexually suggestive comments to a child.

#### Exploitive:

- ◆ Child pornography—photographs, films, videos, internet sites or ‘live’ performances of children in sexual activities or poses.
- ◆ Child prostitution/transactional sex—children are paid by adults for sexual services. Payment may be money, food, drugs or things like clothes, shoes and cell phones.
- ◆ Internet exploitation—adults using email or websites to find children to sexually abuse.
- ◆ Human trafficking for various purposes including sexual exploitation.

#### Signs that sexual abuse may be occurring:

- ◆ Child reports having been sexually abused; may retract story later.
- ◆ Detailed and age-inappropriate interest in and understanding of sexual behaviour.
- ◆ Pregnancy.
- ◆ The presence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- ◆ Frequent headaches and/or stomach aches. This may include vomiting and having difficulty swallowing.
- ◆ Torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
- ◆ Injury to the genital area, including bleeding, swelling or irritation.
- ◆ Pain when sitting and/or walking.
- ◆ Pain and/or difficulty with urinary and/or bowel functions.
- ◆ Unexplained trouble sleeping—nightmares, disturbed sleep patterns.
- ◆ Sudden drop in grades at school, trouble concentrating and/or often absences from school.
- ◆ Unexplained change in eating habits—overeating or refusing to eat.
- ◆ On-going emotional problems—depression, anxiety, fear, anger, moodiness, acting out.
- ◆ Self-destructive tendencies—self-mutilation, or deliberately harming him/herself.
- ◆ Low self-respect.
- ◆ Alcohol or other substance abuse.
- ◆ Withdrawal from friends and family including running away.
- ◆ General behaviour change.

## **Discussing Sex with Children as a Means of Protection**

Parents and caregivers need not be sex experts to talk to children about sex. Most young children are curious about where babies come from, about how girls and boys differ, etc. Parents and caregivers can admit they do not know all the answers, yet answer their questions truthfully in language the child can understand. To avoid discussing these matters conveys the parent's own uneasiness about sex, and may teach children that sex is something of which to be ashamed.

The following pointers suggest ways in which parents and caregivers may address children's sexual concerns:

- ◆ Be "ask-able" – be willing to answer questions about sex. Use language the child will understand, but not silly child language.
- ◆ Use appropriate language – children need to know the correct names of their sex organs such as penis, breast, vagina, etc. Inappropriate words others use to refer to sex organs are socially unacceptable.
- ◆ Give advice in the form of information the child can use to make sound decisions, not as an imperial edict. Caregivers who provide information and encourage discussion are more effective than those who 'lay down the law'.
- ◆ Share information in small doses – choose times and places that feel natural for such discussion. Parents may share or raise discussions when preparing the child for bed or when they are in the car.
- ◆ Encourage the child to talk about sex – though children may feel embarrassed about talking about sex, especially with family members, children's books about sex may be given to the child with a suggestion such as, "I thought you might be interested in this book. If you want to read it, we can talk about it".
- ◆ Respect privacy rights – fair is fair. Parents who feel uncomfortable sharing a bathroom with a child can tell the child. Similarly, the parent might offer to respect the child's privacy by knocking when the child's door is closed.

The real alternatives to proper sex education, say researchers, are peers, the internet, the media – films, 'adult' magazines, TV shows and street corner huddles. Research indicates that there is no evidence to support the premise that proper sex education encourages sexual activity among children and adolescents. On the contrary, accurate information presented in a positive context of loving relationships during pre-adolescence might prevent or pre-empt sexual mishaps and high rates of teenage pregnancies. Teaching children appropriate ways to communicate their needs enhances their self-appreciation.

## **2. Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is trauma or physical injury to a child caused by punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning or otherwise harming a child. It involves physical harm or injury to the child. It can also result from severe discipline, such as using a belt on a child, or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or physical condition.

Physical abuse is any injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.

In 2015, three major cases of physical abuse of young children (the youngest being six years old) in Barbados, one case in Guyana (six-year-old boy) and one case (a four-year-old boy) in St. Lucia grabbed newspaper headlines.

Examples of physical abuse:

- ◆ Cuffing, shaking, and shoving.
- ◆ Pulling a child's hair or ear.
- ◆ Banging a child against a wall.
- ◆ Throwing objects at a child.
- ◆ Biting and pinching.
- ◆ Suffocating.
- ◆ Forcing obnoxious substances into a child's mouth, poisoning.
- ◆ Hitting a child with a belt, electrical cord or stick.
- ◆ Burning a child with scalding water or cigarettes.
- ◆ Giving a child alcohol or inappropriate/recreational drugs.

Signs that physical abuse may be occurring:

- ◆ Frequent injuries with unconvincing or inconsistent explanations.
- ◆ Bald patches on head due to hair pulling.
- ◆ Bruises around the face and mouth.
- ◆ Hand marks, fingerprints, bruises, swollen areas, pinch marks, human bite marks on any part of the body.
- ◆ Cigarette or other burns.
- ◆ Marks from a belt, electrical wire or stick.
- ◆ Multiple bruises at various stages of healing, implying repeated episodes of injuries to the child.
- ◆ Fear of going home and/or constant running away from home.
- ◆ Discomfort with physical contact; shies away from touch.
- ◆ Wearing inappropriate clothing to hide injuries, e.g. long sleeves on a very hot day.

**Physical abuse vs. Discipline:**

In physical abuse, unlike physical forms of discipline, the following elements are present:

- ◆ Unpredictability. The child never knows what is going to set the parent off. There are no clear boundaries or rules. The child is constantly walking on eggshells, never sure what behaviour will trigger a physical assault.
- ◆ Lashing out in anger. Physically abusive parents act out of anger and the desire to assert control, not the motivation to lovingly teach the child. The angrier the parent, the more intense the abuse.
- ◆ Using fear to control behaviour. Parents who are physically abusive may believe that their children need to fear them in order to behave, so they use physical abuse to “keep their child in line.” However, what children are really learning is how to avoid being hit, not how to behave or grow as individuals.

Correction characterized by severe, punitive, dictatorial control often leads to resentment and rebellion. Such harsh discipline is also associated with heightened risk for physical and psychological harm to children as well as increased likelihood the youth will resort to coercion and violence in solving their differences.

### 3. Neglect

“Child neglect is defined as a type of maltreatment related to the failure to provide needed, age-appropriate care. Neglect is usually typified by an on-going pattern of inadequate care and is readily observed by individuals in close contact with the child.”<sup>4</sup>

It is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development.

The Salvation Army has defined neglect as “persistent failure to provide for the child’s basic needs, both physical and emotional.”<sup>5</sup>

Examples of neglect:

- ◆ Failure to provide adequate food and housing.
- ◆ Lack of appropriate supervision.
- ◆ Abandonment
- ◆ Failure to provide necessary medical care.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/child-neglect> accessed 2012/12/18

<sup>5</sup> *Safe and Sound*. 2006. The Salvation Army Caribbean Territory, p.3

- ◆ Inadequate hygiene or clothing.
- ◆ Inattention to a child's emotional needs necessary for normal development.
- ◆ Allowing a child to use/ingest alcohol or illegal chemical substances.

Signs that neglect may be occurring:

- ◆ Clinical signs of deprivation: severe diaper rash, impetigo, lice, diarrhoea, vomiting anaemia, recurring respiratory illness, dehydration.
- ◆ Inadequate clothing, underfeeding.
- ◆ Lack of adult supervision.
- ◆ Developmental lags.
- ◆ Physical underdevelopment.
- ◆ Pasty, dull complexion;
- ◆ Tired—lethargic, listless appearance.
- ◆ Poor dental care.
- ◆ No immunisation or preventive care.
- ◆ Poor personal hygiene.

#### **4. Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is any verbal communication that harms a child. This kind of abuse can involve threats, insults, extreme punishment, name-calling, blaming and more. Basically, anything that makes the child feel horrible inside. While emotional abuse doesn't involve physical pain or sexual acts, the effects of emotional abuse can hurt far worse and cause a lifetime of psychological problems.<sup>6</sup>

The Anglican Diocese of Southwark defines emotional abuse as “the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.”<sup>7</sup> The Salvation Army defines it as “deliberate or careless actions that cause or result in repeated humiliation, emotional trauma, fear or intimidation.”<sup>8</sup>

Examples of emotional abuse:

- ◆ Verbal assaults with name calling, e.g. “stupid”, “worthless”, “a mistake”, “you just like your father/mother”.
- ◆ Sarcastic putdowns or belittling, especially in front of other people.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://voices.yahoo.com/emotional-abuse-children-warning-signs-how-1314029.html> accessed 2012/12/19

<sup>7</sup> *A Safe Church*. 2008. Anglican Diocese of Southwark (UK)

<sup>8</sup> *Safe and Sound*. 2006. The Salvation Army Caribbean Territory, p.4

- ◆ Use of derogatory, threatening, derisive or demeaning language, e.g. "I brought you into this world and I can take you out."
- ◆ Unnecessary shouting.
- ◆ Terrorising, stimulating fear, making threats of extreme punishments.
- ◆ Constant inappropriate and/or unwarranted criticism.
- ◆ Inappropriate socialising through reinforcement and encouragement of aggression, substance abuse, sexual acting out, delinquent and criminal activity.
- ◆ Unrealistic expectations of a child academically, physically, socially.
- ◆ Violent and/or obscene language.
- ◆ Deliberately withholding affection and love.
- ◆ Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Signs that emotional abuse may be occurring:

- ◆ Lags in physical, mental, social and emotional development.
- ◆ Personality, sleep, eating and speech disorders.
- ◆ Low self-esteem, feelings of shame and guilt, unusual fears, negative statements about self.
- ◆ Persistent nightmares.
- ◆ Difficulties in developing healthy interpersonal relationships with other children and/or adults, withdrawn, intensely watchful, especially of adults.
- ◆ Craves attention.
- ◆ Inability to trust, discomfort with physical contact and/or closeness.
- ◆ Self-destructive behaviour such as cutting self, suicidal tendencies.
- ◆ Low enthusiasm and perseverance.
- ◆ Aggressiveness, bullying others, cruel to others.
- ◆ Problems with school work.
- ◆ Alcohol and/or drug abuse.
- ◆ Sexual promiscuity.
- ◆ Psychosomatic illnesses.

Emotional abuse accompanies all other forms of child abuse but does not necessarily indicate that other abuse is taking place.

## **5. Bullying**

Bullying is deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. Bullying may be perpetrated by another child or an adult. There is no clear boundary between bullying and abuse and a significant number of offenders are themselves minors. Young perpetrators of abuse are still children and are entitled to have their needs

considered though steps may need to be taken to protect other children.<sup>9</sup>

Examples of bullying:

- ◆ Physical—e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping, stealing.
- ◆ Verbal—e.g. racist remarks, name-calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages, abusive messages on other social media, persistent teasing.
- ◆ Emotional—e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group.
- ◆ Sexual—unwanted physical attack or sexually abusive comments.

Signs that bullying may be taking place:

- ◆ The child reports that he/she is being bullied.
- ◆ An increased expression of fear.
- ◆ A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.
- ◆ Behavioural changes, e.g. reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed or tearful.
- ◆ An unexplained drop off in performance.
- ◆ Physical signs, e.g. stomach aches, headaches, difficulty sleeping, bed wetting, scratches and bruises, damaged clothes and sudden bingeing.

## **6. Why Abuse is Not Reported**

In a UNICEF study done in Barbados, 84% of respondents indicated that they didn't report child sexual abuse because they feared negative personal consequences while 75% said they did not report because it was not their business and/or they were embarrassed to step forward.

# Factors that Can Contribute to Abuse

Children do not ask for abuse. Abuse is NEVER the child's fault.

Not all abuse is deliberate or intended.

## 1. Home

Many forms of abuse arise from a lack of understanding of appropriate child rearing practices or involve immature parents who were themselves subjected to poor parenting or other stresses in the home. Home situations that could precipitate child abuse include:

- ◆ Single parent without adequate emotional, financial and extended family support systems.
- ◆ Chaotic home life without routine or order.
- ◆ Adult or older sibling abusing alcohol and/or drugs.
- ◆ Pre-existing violence within the family unit including high parental conflict.
- ◆ Geographic and/or social isolation.
- ◆ Overcrowding in the home.
- ◆ Adult unemployment leading to financial and other stresses including homelessness.
- ◆ Depression, psychosis or mental challenges in parent.
- ◆ Parent with low self-esteem and/or poor control over their emotions often resulting in low tolerance of frustration.
- ◆ Parents' fanatical religious beliefs.
- ◆ Poor parent-child interaction.
- ◆ Inaccurate knowledge and expectations about child development.

## 2. Culture

Some forms of abuse can arise from established cultural beliefs:

- ◆ Children are property.
- ◆ Children should be seen and not heard.
- ◆ Parents have the right to control their children in any way they wish.
- ◆ Children need to be toughened up to face the hardships of life.
- ◆ Having a child is seen as a "rite of passage" to adulthood.

## 3. Education

Some forms of child abuse are mislabelled as behaviour management in an



educational setting. Actions that are abusive rather than corrective include:

- ◆ Cuffing and/or shaking a child.
- ◆ Shutting a child in a closet.
- ◆ Forcing a child to remain sitting, standing or motionless for extended periods of time.
- ◆ Denying a child the use of a toilet.
- ◆ Taping a child's mouth shut.
- ◆ Using sarcastic put-downs when speaking to a child, especially publicly.
- ◆ Ignoring a child who needs help.
- ◆ Making a child the butt of teacher's jokes.
- ◆ Humiliating a child in front of others.

#### **4. Community**

Child abuse can also be generated by societal factors:

- ◆ Lack of access to adequate medical care, child care, and social services.
- ◆ Exposure to racism/discrimination.
- ◆ Inadequate school environments.
- ◆ Exposure to environmental toxins.
- ◆ Dangerous/violent neighbourhoods.
- ◆ On-going community violence.
- ◆ Unemployment.

## Reporting Situations of Concern

All reports of child abuse must be treated with confidentiality and respect. There are times when people make reports of abuse simply to cause problems for the alleged abuser. It is important, therefore, that reports be thoroughly investigated in as objective a manner as possible. Be mindful of local laws governing which agencies are legally empowered to investigate reports of child abuse.

All persons working with children and youth under the age of 18 within the context of PAWI programmes and projects have a responsibility to ensure that these children are protected while in the care of any PAWI Assembly or Department and to raise issues that have to do with their care and safety. They have a responsibility to:

- ◆ Be familiar with this policy and process for reporting.
- ◆ Know who to contact within PAWI and relevant governmental agencies to express concerns.
- ◆ Become knowledgeable about the indicators of abuse.
- ◆ Be observant.
- ◆ Promote equity and fairness in responding to reports/allegations of abuse.
- ◆ Understand that there may be an obligation under law to report the issue to the relevant governmental agencies.

### Principles of Reporting

- ◆ All concerns and allegations MUST be immediately reported appropriately to the person in charge using the Incident Report Form. Where the law mandates that child abuse must be reported to specific agencies such reports must be made at this point.
- ◆ Strong emotions can be aroused by child abuse but it is necessary that incidents be handled as dispassionately as possible.
- ◆ Loyalties to colleagues, PAWI and the local Assembly cannot be allowed to cloud how reports are made and subsequently handled.
- ◆ Concerns need to be clearly expressed so that they can be properly investigated.
- ◆ Those who express concerns in good faith need the assurance that they will not be penalised for doing so.
- ◆ Issues need to be managed with sensitivity for the person reporting, the alleged abuser and the child involved.
- ◆ Guilt or innocence must not be presumed. There is potential for abuse of this procedure by someone making a malicious complaint.
- ◆ Where investigations require the involvement of governmental agencies, law enforcement or the legal system they cannot be kept confidential.
- ◆ Issues need to be resolved quickly in order to protect our children and youth.

- ◆ Those who have reported concerns/incidents of child abuse need to know that their disclosure is being investigated.
- ◆ It is important that reports or allegations of abuse are investigated expeditiously. Failure to consistently do this will result in the emergence of a culture of silence that in turn will allow abuse to flourish.
- ◆ Some situations (e.g., bullying by an older child) may be resolved at an informal level but PAWI staff and volunteers are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine conclusively whether or not abuse has taken place.
- ◆ The child protection service in each country has the legal responsibility to investigate all child abuse referrals. This protocol is not intended to supplant the duties and responsibilities of such agencies.

### **Reports of Abuse Taking Place Outside of the Immediate Assembly Environment**

There are times when a child or other person may report or suspect abuse is taking place outside of the Assembly environment, e.g., the home or school. In such cases, the person receiving the report:

- ◆ Shall immediately inform the pastor of the Assembly.
- ◆ The pastor shall immediately inform the District Presiding Bishop.
- ◆ The pastor shall immediately submit the report to the relevant child protection service and shall liaise with that service on how to inform the parents of the child involved.

### **Procedure for Reporting**

#### **Step 1 – Initial Report**

Children and youth generally talk to someone they trust regardless of that individual's position. If a child reports that he/she is being abused:

- ◆ A report is not an established fact of guilt but rather a request for assessment of the safety and condition of a child. It is the beginning of a helping process for children and families.
- ◆ Stay calm so as not to frighten the child.
- ◆ Reassure the child that he/she is not to blame and making the report is the right thing to do.
- ◆ Listen to the child showing that he/she is being taken seriously.
- ◆ Inform the child that you must tell others so as to ensure the abuse stops.
- ◆ Make sure the safety of the child is given priority.
- ◆ Refer the child to medical personnel if there is need for medical attention. In some jurisdictions it is the responsibility of the police department or child

protection service to handle referrals for medical attention. Assemblies must be aware of the correct legal protocol in the country where they serve.

### **Report from child, youth, volunteer or PAWI member:**

- ◆ The person receiving the information shall immediately fill out the **Incident Report Form** (IRF) and draw it to the attention of the head of the relevant department and pastor within the local Assembly. Where reporting child abuse to governmental agencies is mandatory under the law, a copy of the IRF shall be immediately forwarded to the appropriate government agency. The IRF is a critical part of creating a proper paper trail both for PAWI and for the relevant government agencies.
- ◆ When recording on the IRF the report of a child who alleges abuse, the person recording the report must be extremely careful to avoid putting thoughts into the child's head or words into the child's mouth. If a police investigation subsequently determines that the questions asked of the child clouded the evidence it may be difficult or impossible to properly resolve the issue.
- ◆ Try to ascertain the name and address of the alleged perpetrator.
- ◆ Record the circumstances in which the original disclosure of the concern was made.
- ◆ Record what you are told as accurately as possible using the child's words. Do not interpret or embellish. Record the facts as they are told to you.
- ◆ Do not make snap judgements. An abused child will often not share all details at once as trust needs to be established. The situation may be more complex or severe than it first appears.
- ◆ Record what you say to the child.
- ◆ Record what actions you have taken.
- ◆ Sign the report and date it.

### **Administrative Leave**

In the context of these protocols administrative leave is not a disciplinary measure. Neither does administrative leave imply guilt as PAWI remains committed to the concept that one is innocent until proven guilty. Such leave is to facilitate the resolution of the matter while protecting the allegedly abused child, the alleged abuser and the integrity of PAWI. Where the person going on administrative leave is a paid employee he/she shall receive full salary for the period during which he/she is on leave.

- ◆ If the report involves a volunteer working within the Assembly that individual shall immediately be placed on administrative leave until the matter can be properly investigated by the appropriate legal authority and resolved and a copy of the IRF shall be sent to the District Presiding Bishop, who shall inform the National and General Presiding Bishops.

- ◆ Where a Christian leader—such as a pastor, elder, or Assembly Board member—is accused of child abuse there will be the presumption of innocence until the investigation proves otherwise. However, for the protection of the child and the accused as well as the integrity of the ministry of the Assembly, the accused person shall immediately be placed on administrative leave and every effort shall be made to have the matter investigated thoroughly and expeditiously by the appropriate legal authority to ascertain the truth and develop a proper solution. The alleged abuser is not to be allowed contact on Assembly premises with the child allegedly abused and must be advised to refrain from all contact with the child outside of the Assembly. The completed IRF shall be sent directly to the District Presiding Bishop who shall immediately inform the National and General Presiding Bishops.
- ◆ If the head of department is the person implicated in the report, the completed IRF shall be sent directly to the pastor of the Assembly and copied to the District Presiding Bishop who shall immediately inform the National and General Presiding Bishops. The head of department shall immediately be placed on administrative leave until the matter can be properly investigated by the appropriate legal authority and resolved.
- ◆ Persons on administrative leave can only be reinstated when the matter has been thoroughly resolved. If found guilty, those persons are not to be allowed continued involvement with ministry to children within the Assembly environment.

**If you observe injuries or behaviours in children which are consistent with those described in the section on Types of Abuse you should:**

- ◆ Ask open questions about what you observe. Example: “How did this injury happen?” rather than “Did your mother do that?”
- ◆ Note what the child or adult says in response.
- ◆ Carefully record your observations as soon as possible following the guidelines in Step 1, notify the appropriate person as in Step 1 and keep the record in a secure place.

**Step 2 – internal Report to PAWI Authorities**

- ◆ In all cases the District Presiding Bishop must be informed immediately whether or not the child protection service’s intervention is sought. In all cases, within 48 hours of the initial report, a copy of the IRF shall be sent to the District Presiding Bishop under confidential cover and he shall forward a copy of the report to the National and General Presiding Bishops.
- ◆ Nothing in these protocols is to be construed as empowering the District, National or General Presiding Bishops delaying a report being made to the child protection service or police department.

- ◆ In most Caribbean countries there are agencies designated by law to intervene in cases of child abuse and nothing should be done that would delay or hinder those agencies in carrying out effective investigations of alleged abuse. PAWI is not an agency designated by law to investigate any form of child abuse.

### **Step 3 – Response**

- ◆ Handling reports of child abuse must be done carefully, thoroughly and prayerfully. Both the accused and the accuser need to be dealt with in a fair and objective manner.
- ◆ Dismissing a report as probably unfounded or a minor issue without proper investigation could result in a child being subjected to continued abuse. Also, if it is determined at a later date that the concern was brought to the attention of the Assembly and was not addressed, there could be legal consequences.
- ◆ The handling of a situation in a high profile manner when it could be managed discreetly or presuming guilt before a thorough investigation is done could result in serious professional, social and personal consequences for the accused.
- ◆ Where an external investigation is instituted by the child protection services or a police department, PAWI and all its component parts will give full cooperation at all times.
- ◆ Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

### **Disciplinary Action**

- ◆ When a complaint is substantiated in whole or in part against a PAWI member, appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken against the abuser in accordance with the relevant PAWI Bylaws and the child protection services, District, National and General Presiding Bishops will be immediately notified.
- ◆ Discipline may involve removal from involvement in working with children, suspension of membership for a specified time or termination of membership in the local Assembly.
- ◆ Persons involved in incidents that have been referred to the child protection services will be subject to the decisions of those agencies in addition to disciplinary action within the Assembly.

### **Step 4 – Resolution**

- ◆ Whether a report of abuse has been substantiated or not, the person who reported the issue will be informed that an investigation has been completed. Individuals need to be supported for their courage in reporting a concern. They also need to know that PAWI takes the protection of children seriously and will respond quickly to allegations of abuse. However, details of the investigation are

not to be shared.

- ◆ A final detailed written report must be submitted to the District Presiding Bishop within 48 hours of the issue being resolved and the PAWI District will maintain a central registry of incidents outlining concerns reported and how those concerns were resolved. This report shall be immediately copied to the National and General Presiding Bishops.
- ◆ Situations requiring investigation and action inevitably result in concern and anxiety within the local Assembly. Leaders are advised to use the opportunity to review this policy with youth workers, volunteers and employees to ensure they understand the directives and the consequences of infringement.
- ◆ It can also be an opportunity to review with children and youth the intent of this policy and the importance of talking to someone about situations that make them uncomfortable.

#### **Step 5 – After a referral to the governmental agencies:**

- ◆ Co-operate with the agency: Don't interfere. Be guided by that agency before any further action is taken.
- ◆ Attend multi-agency strategy meetings if invited.
- ◆ With advice from the agency, ensure that those who need support are offered it.
- ◆ Try to remain non-judgemental and don't take sides.
- ◆ Don't gossip and try to stop others gossiping about the issue.
- ◆ Carry out a risk assessment on your activities. Could risks be reduced to prevent a similar situation arising in the future?

#### **News Media**

- ◆ All press enquiries are to be directed to the District, National or the General Presiding Bishops.

## **Guidelines for Creating Child-Safe Ministry**

**It is not possible to completely and always protect children from potentially harmful circumstances. During the course of daily activities and interactions with others, situations may develop that provide the potential for abusive behaviours to occur. However, it is possible to minimize risks in Assemblies by adhering to some general guidelines.**

It must be stressed that while these guidelines can minimize the potential for the abuse of children and youth, they also provide protection for child/youth workers/volunteers. False allegations can and do occur for a variety of reasons. Assembly leaders and employees are not exempt from these allegations. The ensuing investigation can be exhausting. Without a witness for your defence it can be difficult to prove your innocence.

We need to be cognizant of the reality that within PAWI Assemblies there are persons who are currently being abused, persons who have been abused in the past and are still in need of inner healing, potential/present/past perpetrators of abuse, those at risk (see previous section on *Factors that Can Contribute to Abuse* p.14) as well as adults and children who have never been affected.

### **1. Commit to the basic practice and philosophy of providing safe environments for children and youth participating in the ministry of the church.**

- ◆ This protocol is not optional for any ministry unit within PAWI.
- ◆ This policy seeks to incorporate the theology of a loving Heavenly Father expressed through compassion and service.
- ◆ It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children participating in Assembly programmes to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If, in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other PAWI policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed as relieving persons having contact with children from this responsibility.
- ◆ It is acknowledged that a protocol and education about that protocol will not necessarily deter an abuser. However, the protocol will alert persons to the signs of abuse and provide a course of action to be followed for the protection of an abused child.

### **2. Require all staff, volunteers, child/youth workers and members to be familiar with this protocol.**



- ◆ Once adopted, all child/youth workers within PAWI programmes are required to be familiar with this protocol.
- ◆ A copy of this protocol shall be kept in an accessible place where it can be reviewed by those who wish to report suspected abuse.
- ◆ Training sessions based on this protocol shall be provided at the District and local Assembly level on a regular basis to ensure all personnel are knowledgeable on the protocol and its implementation.

**3. Create a process in each ministry unit that makes it safe and possible for staff, volunteers and children/youth to report concerns.**

- ◆ Introduce the protocol openly and in a positive manner.
- ◆ Speak about it frankly so people can become familiar with it.
- ◆ Establish a clear process within each ministry unity for those who need to voice concerns about a child being abused.
- ◆ Receive all expressions of concern with respect.

**4. Choose child/youth workers/volunteers with care.**

- ◆ It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable persons from working with children. This applies to both paid staff and volunteers, whether part-time or full-time. The Assembly must ensure careful selection and recruitment of ordained and lay ministers, voluntary workers and paid workers with children and young people.
- ◆ Anyone with a previous conviction for offenses related to the abuse of children is automatically excluded from working with children. Requesting a Police Certificate of Character is sometimes the only way a past criminal record is brought to light.
- ◆ New members who express a desire to work with children and youth must have been a member of the local Assembly for a minimum of one year before beginning ministry with children/youth. This period allows for better evaluation of the suitability of the applicant for working with children.
- ◆ New workers/volunteers must be properly supervised for a minimum of three to six months after appointment.
- ◆ All persons volunteering to work with children and youth must complete the *Application for Work with Children and Youth*. References are to be contacted. A *Sample Letter for Requesting a Reference* has been provided as well as a *Reference Form*. If the volunteer is accepted, the *Volunteer Agreement Form* must be completed. While this can be perceived as cumbersome paperwork, in the event of an abusive incident occurring the documents provide evidence of a desire and effort to protect.
- ◆ Persons convicted in a court of law of committing child abuse will not serve as volunteers or staff working in any Assembly sponsored activity or programme

for children/youth.

**5. Plan ministry to children/youth in a way that will minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.**

- ◆ Child/youth workers/volunteers are not to be left alone with a child or teenager where there is little or no opportunity for the activity to be observed by others. If a separate room is used the door will remain open. Install glass panels in doors to rooms where children will be accommodated during the programmes at the Assembly so that someone outside the room can observe what is happening should it be necessary to close the door.
- ◆ Child/youth workers/volunteers are not to meet a child or young person off Assembly premises alone. If a meeting off Assembly premises is necessary, the ministry unit's head and the child/youth's parent/guardian are to be made fully aware of the meeting and its purpose and at least two unrelated adults will be present.
- ◆ Never leave a child or group of children unattended. Provide appropriate adult supervision at all times. When children/youth meet for ministry, whether on Assembly premises or off, at least two unrelated adults are to accompany them regardless of the group's size or activity.
- ◆ Pay attention if an adult shows a greater than normal interest in a child e.g., such as buying a child special gifts for no apparent reason.
- ◆ Pay attention if a child indicates that he/she does not want to be with a particular person.

**6. Persons working with infants and small children are required to take special care.**

- ◆ Diapers may be changed in a separate room but doors will be always kept open.
- ◆ Small children are to be toileted in such a way that the privacy of the child is respected but the procedure can be discreetly observed. The door should be left open.
- ◆ No older child shall be permitted to take a younger child to the bathroom unless those children are siblings and the procedure can be discreetly observed.

**7. Children need physical touch. It can bring them reassurance, a feeling of being cared for, comfort and safety. However, this activity has the potential for misinterpretation. Touch must be appropriate and safe.**

- ◆ Touch must be related to the child's needs and not those of the adult.
- ◆ Touch must be age appropriate. Affirm children with appropriate touching by keeping hugs brief and "shoulder-to-shoulder" or "side-by-side". Always keep hands at (not below) shoulder level. A caregiver's kiss should be on the forehead

or cheek only. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit next to you.

- ◆ Children and youth have a right to decide how much or little physical contact they have with others. Except in unusual circumstances, such as the need for medical attention, their wishes are to be respected.
- ◆ Touching may be acceptable in a public setting or in a group where activities are visible. It is not appropriate behind closed doors or in an unobservable location.

#### **8. Vigilance must be exercised in situations where children and youth have access to computers and the internet.**

- ◆ Pornographic sites and chat rooms have the potential to draw children into dangerous activities. Some will groom the child, gain trust and then may attempt to set up a meeting with the child. For this reason adults should supervise computer use by children on Assembly premises.

#### **9. Guidelines for leaders in communicating electronically.**

- ◆ If teenagers want to give you their mobile phone numbers, e-mail addresses or similar, and communicate with them this way, make sure that their parents know and have agreed.
- ◆ Be circumspect in your communications with young people to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or any behaviour which could be construed as “grooming” those children for subsequent abusive acts.
- ◆ Be careful how you sign off: consider, for instance, how ‘love’ and ‘XXX’ might be perceived and interpreted by the young person or his/her parent/guardian.

#### **10. Educate children and youth about how to keep themselves safe. This can be done in an informal, positive way without instilling unnecessary anxiety.**

- ◆ Talk to them about:
  - Appropriate and inappropriate touch
  - Appropriate interactions with strangers
  - The safety of group activities
  - Internet dangers<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ Ensure that if an incident occurs children and youth know how to deal with it and who to talk to within the Assembly or ministry unit.

#### **11. When children are injured.**

- ◆ Keep a written record of any injury that may occur, along with the details of any

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<sup>10</sup> UNICEF and local child protection services have very good programmes with such education that can be adapted to the local Assembly's use.

treatment administered to the injured child.

- ◆ If during the Assembly's care a child is accidentally hurt, the child appears distressed, the child appears to be sexually aroused or the child misunderstands or misinterprets something done by an adult care-giver report any such incident to a colleague and to the appropriate Assembly authority immediately and make a written note of it. Tactfully discuss the incident with the child's parent(s).

## **12. Additional good practices.**

- ◆ Always work with children in an open environment (e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage open communication).
- ◆ Children and young people should not be permitted to remain on Assembly property unless two unrelated adults are present.
- ◆ Make the experience of attending the Assembly fun.
- ◆ Be fair and firm when confronting and dealing with bullying.
- ◆ Always give priority to the welfare of the child.
- ◆ Always challenge children's use of inappropriate language.
- ◆ Always request written parental consent if children are to be transported away from Assembly property (e.g. picnics, day trips, sporting activities, etc.) and ensure that two unrelated adults accompany the children/youth.
- ◆ Persons working with children should be excellent role models.
- ◆ Always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback to children rather than negative criticism.
- ◆ It is not the responsibility of workers within the Assembly to decide that child abuse is occurring. It is their responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting the matter to PAWI's designated authorities so that inquiries can be made and necessary action taken to protect the young person. This applies to both allegations and suspicions of abuse occurring within the Assembly and elsewhere.

## Sex Offenders and the Church

On occasions persons with a history of abusing children come into Assembly programmes. Their need for contact with people and for Christian fellowship should be provided as we offer God's love to the 'whosoever' and seek to deal with all persons in a redemptive manner. However, we also have a fundamental responsibility to care for and protect children, youth and vulnerable adults within PAWI. Persons with this history cannot serve as volunteers or staff in children and youth departments and programmes or transport children to and from Assembly activities.

The complex nature of child abuse intervention and the treatment of perpetrators require resources that are usually beyond the scope of ministry provided by the local Assembly. However, the presence of a known perpetrator in a congregation requires high levels of vigilance. Provision for alternative opportunities for perpetrators to grow spiritually in settings where children are not present is strongly urged.

The offender may assert that he/she is a changed person and may sincerely wish this were true. However, even with extensive counselling and behaviour modification, sexual aberrations are extremely difficult to eradicate. Unfortunately this is something the offender must live with.

There are others who will intentionally use the Assembly setting or activities with children to re-offend.

For these reasons, if a known sex offender wishes to be part of a local Assembly, precautions must be put in place. The pastor must have a gracious but frank discussion with the offender and establish clear boundaries regarding contact with children and youth. This is for the protection of the children and young people but also for the offender himself who may at some point be wrongly accused.

If a person abuses a child on Assembly premises or at Assembly functions and its leaders know, or should have known, the person is a sex offender, the Assembly may have a difficult legal case to defend.

## Protocol Implementation

These *Child Protection Protocols* will be an effective and useful document only as they are implemented at the level of local Assembly ministry units. A major intent of the document is that it be used as a teaching tool and resource with children/youth volunteers/workers in the Assemblies' young people's programmes. The way in which it is used, of course, depends on the age of the child. The basic message to everyone in our congregations needs to be:

- ◆ Some behaviour by adults is not acceptable.
- ◆ Children and youth have a right to say "no".
- ◆ PAWI has a process that can help.
- ◆ Tell someone.

Resources are available from the governmental child protection services and UNICEF that can provide additional information or teaching material. The internet has literally millions of web sites with pertinent information. Your search therefore must be narrowed to specific topics—for example, child abuse types, emotional child abuse symptoms, etc.

Education alone will not totally eliminate abuse but can inform and empower individuals to be proactive about minimizing its occurrence and the resulting negative effects on children's lives.

**Incident Report Form  
Suspected Abuse of a Child  
CONFIDENTIAL**

**Name of Assembly:**

**Address of Assembly:**

**Details of Child/Youth Suspected of Being Abused:**

Name: .....

Date of Birth: Year ..... Month ..... Day .....

Address: .....

Telephone Number: .....

**Details About the Person Reporting Incident:**

Name: .....

Address: .....

Telephone Number: .....

Position in Assembly/Ministry Unit:

.....

**Details About the Accused Person (if known):**

Name: .....

Address: .....

Telephone Number: .....

Position in Assembly/Ministry Unit:









Name of Applicant .....

Date of Birth .....

Maiden Name .....

Present Address .....

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Telephone Numbers .....

Previous Addresses in Past Five Years .....

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Assembly Attended in Past Five Years .....

Name of Pastor .....

Pastor's Telephone Number .....

**Please list any skills, qualifications and interests that you have.**

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**Please list any previous experience you have had in working with children and/or youth. Please provide the name of the Assembly/organisation and the dates.**

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**Do you have any illness which might directly affect your work with children and youth? If yes, please provide details. This will not necessarily prejudice your application.**

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**Please list three references that can be contacted concerning this application.**

1). Name .....	2). Name .....	3). Name .....
.....	.....	.....
Address .....	Address .....	Address .....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
Tel: .....	Tel: .....	Tel: .....
.....	.....	.....

- I agree to attend training on the Child Protection Protocols.
- I agree to implement the Child Protection Protocols.
- I agree to update my child care and protection training as required.
- I agree that the persons I have given as references may be contacted by the Assembly where I am applying to work with children/youth.

Signature:	Date:
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**Reference Form for Assembly Volunteers/Workers**  
Private and Confidential

Name of Volunteer	
What is your relationship to the volunteer/worker? Friend, family, employer, other – please specify	
How long have you known the volunteer/worker?	
Please comment on his/her honesty, reliability, health, experience, suitability to work with children/youth.	
Do you have any other comment that would be helpful in processing his/her application	

Signature	
Please print your name	
Date	

**Sample Letter Requesting a Reference for a New Volunteer/Worker**

Dear .....

*(Name of volunteer/worker)* is interested in working with children/youth at *(name of Assembly)*. *(He/She)* will be working primarily with *(age)* year olds as *(give brief description or work)*.

The *(name of Assembly)* is committed to providing a safe environment for our children and youth. We wish to ensure that those whom we accept as volunteers are suitable and will provide a positive and healthy experience for those in our youth programmes. *(Applicant's name)* has provided your name as a person who can give a character reference.

Please complete the attached questionnaire and return it to us in the pre-paid envelope. It will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your earliest attention to this would be greatly appreciated.

With many thanks and God's blessings.

Yours Sincerely,

*(Pastor's name and signature)*

## Volunteer Agreement

This form **must** be completed by volunteers/workers in the Assembly who volunteer/work with children and young people.

- I agree to work/minister under the direction and in full cooperation with the pastor, the head of the ministry unit to which I may be assigned, or persons delegated by them.
- I agree to be guided by PAWI's mission statement.
- I fully endorse PAWI's Statement of Faith.
- I agree to conduct myself at all times in a way that will be a positive example to the youth/children I serve.
- I agree to attend training on PAWI's *Child Protection Protocols* from time to time as arranged by the Assembly I attend and to implement the protocols in my work/ministry with children/youth.
- I agree to behave in accordance with all guidelines that are part of PAWI's *Child Protection Protocols*.
- I agree that the protection of our youth/children is part of my responsibility as a volunteer or staff member.

Full Name (CAPITAL LETTERS)	
Address	
Assembly	
Signature	