Charter for an Intercultural Approach to Safeguarding

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Introduction

An intercultural approach to Safeguarding involves adopting attitudes and mechanisms that make these practices relevant in diverse contexts—meaning they are truly understood, accepted, and effective. Experience has shown that "universal" standardised approaches are often ill-suited or counter-productive in certain cultural environments. The goal is to reduce the risk of cultural rejection and ensure policies are centred on the human person within their specific sociocultural reality.

The stake of the intercultural approach is therefore to minimise the risks of cultural rejection of Safeguarding practices, which are often considered "foreign" realities. The challenge is to ensure that Safeguarding policies are not disconnected from local realities but are truly centred on the human person within their current sociocultural conditions.

Here are ten essential markers—true moral and operational pillars—to meet this challenge:

1.

I will cultivate cultural humility:

- ✓ I will renounce the idea that my own perspective is universal and the only "correct" one, or that I am an "expert" in all places and situations
- ✓ I will adopt a posture of listening and learning, thereby valuing the protective wisdom of other cultures
- ✓ I will avoid judging local behaviors before understanding their meaning.

African proverb:

«If you speak to someone and they don't listen, be silent, listen to them… and you might know why they aren't listening.»

2.

I will value local strengths as treasures:

collaborate with existing community protection systems (traditional leaders, religious leaders, and other community pillars) instead of creating parallel circuits that could be perceived as external interference.

African Proverb:

«Lift your load to your knee, and people will help you put it on your head»

3.

I will adopt the local language:

- ✓ translation and adaptation of Safeguarding concepts into local languages
- ✓ preference for accessible forms of expression (images, skits, songs, proverbs) that resonate within the local community
- ✓ avoid abstract legal terms…

African Proverb:

«Words are like a spider's web: for the skillful man, they are a shelter; for the clumsy, they are a trap»

4.

I will take sociocultural difficulties seriously:

- ✓ address the imposition of silence or the inability of actual or potential victims to express themselves manually
- ✓ ensure no cultural obstacle stifles their voices
- ✓ invest in finding adapted cultural means so that everyone can express themselves, even without writing or the internet

African Proverb:

«The child who is on the back does not fear the rain»

5.

I will collaborate with cultural interpreters:

- ✓ they are the bridges that will help contextualize the risks specific to each environment in terms of culturally encouraged violence
- ✓ they will mediate to explain the scope of what is proposed in other cultures
- ✓ and they will help the local culture to rediscover protective values that are sometimes forgotten…

African Proverb:

«Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one can encompass it alone»

6.

I will identify local sociocultural power dynamics:

- ✓ identify the different social figures of authority (traditional and religious leaders, opinion leaders among youth or women, extended family, etc.)
- ✓ understand their positive or negative roles regarding local Safeguarding practices
- ✓ proceed with discernment and wisdom.

African Proverb:

«Only a fool measures water with a basket»

7.

I will ensure the involvement of all social categories:

- ✓ as actors in the development, popularisation, and implementation of local Safeguarding policies
- ✓ particularly the categories of potential or actual victims as well as local defenders of their rights.

African Proverb:

«The sun that shines does not ignore a village just because it is small»

8.

I will approach taboos with tact:

- ✓ respect local cultural norms related to gender, sexuality, and the body
- ✓ collaborate with local populations to find culturally appropriate indirect language (proverbs, tales, metaphors, etc.) to raise awareness about Safeguarding without causing rejection.

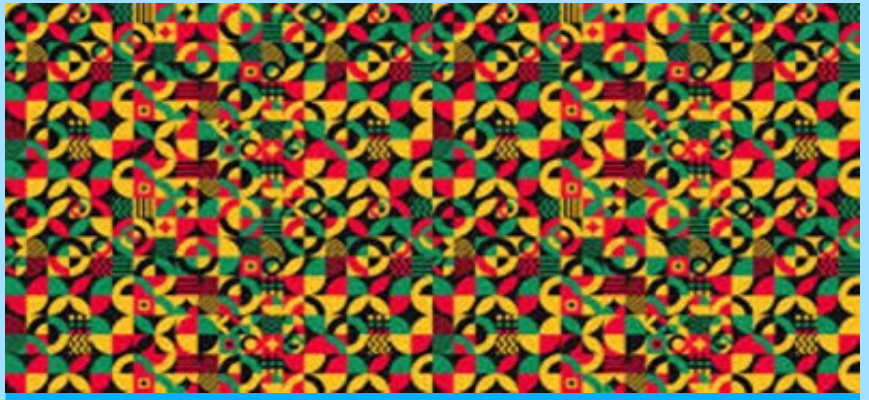
African Proverb:

«An egg does not dance with a stone»

9.

I will secure reporting to make it a safe haven:

- ✓ Use creativity to develop reporting mechanisms adapted to local realities.
- ✓ Create safe spaces where trust can grow and where speaking out does not put anyone in danger.
- ✓ Rely on trusted figures to protect victims against stigmatisation.



African Proverb:

«The leg is smart: it puts the bone in front and the flesh behind»

10.

I will not trivialise material constraints of basic necessity:

- ✓ Recognise that factors such as the financial precariousness of victims, regional phone coverage, or cultural requirements for parental or marital permission can make even the best Safeguarding policies impossible to implement.

African Proverb:

«You don't throw a stone at the place where you have placed a gourd of oil»

Conclusion

This charter is not a list of frozen rules, but a path of fraternity. It invites us to walk with others, within their realities, to build together a culture of Safeguarding rooted in diversity and human dignity.

Applying these ten principles helps reduce cultural misunderstandings surrounding Western-developed Safeguarding concepts and fosters the emergence of an effective protection culture rooted in the diversity of socio-cultural environments.

Thank you for your kind attention!