



Children's Future Child Protection Policy

Policy Area: Child Protection Policy

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Title of Policy: Children's Future Child Protection Policy

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Approved By: Lee Henley

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Child abuse happens in all societies throughout the world. The child abusers can be anyone, including those who work with or care for children.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children.
- The duty bearers are accountable to eradicate child abuse.

Based on the above guiding context and principles, Children's Future is obliged and committed to ensuring that children involved with its programs are protected from any form of abuse. Children's Future aims to provide a safe and friendly environment where children can develop and grow in a healthy way. This Policy will help protect both the child from abuse and the adult from false accusation.

The policy aims to foster a community of Children's Future children, families, staff, volunteers, and visitors who have respectful, loving, and appropriate relationships with each other, based on clear expectations and commitments to the safety and well-being of everyone involved, especially children.

No policy can anticipate or plan for every circumstance that may arise, especially in the context of child protection in Cambodia. When circumstances arise that are not explicitly outlined here, Children's Future leadership and associates should make judgments about child protection based on Children's Future's core values:

- a. Love every child
- b. Love every child equally
- c. Treat every child and adult with respect and compassion

- d. Help others whenever you can
- e. Work hard and be a dependable part of the CFI family

- f. Take initiative and be accountable for your actions
- g. Always communicate openly when problems arise
- h. Be honest
- i. Have fun
- j. Learn and grow together

II. KEY DEFINITIONS

A **child** means every human being below the age of eighteen years. In case the age is not clearly known, in the context of this Child Protection Policy a child means any child or young adult who is using Children's Future services.

Child abuse means physical, sexual or mental harm or neglect caused to a child.

Child Protection Policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and shows that the organization is taking its duty of care seriously. This policy is reviewed yearly, child protection training provided to each new employee and current staff re-trained each year.

III. CHILDREN'S FUTURE STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

As an organization working with children from very poor and challenging backgrounds, Children's Future's first priority is the safety and well-being of the children under its care. Children's Future is committed to a strict child protection policy to ensure children are not exposed to abuse, exploitation, violence or neglect. Children's Future is committed to:

- Respecting the rights and dignity of the children, families, and communities with whom we work by always acting according to the best interest of children.
- Actively preventing child abuse.
- Taking positive action to prevent child abusers from becoming involved with Children's Future in any way and take stringent measures against any Children's Future associate who commits child abuse.

The policy conforms to the general principles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child as follows:

Best Interests of the Child: The best interests of the child will be Children's Future's primary consideration. All decisions and actions concerning a child will serve the best interests of the child. When weighing alternatives, Children's Future will seek to ensure that the final decision or action arrived at will be that in which the child receives the maximum benefit possible.

Children's Future will at all times consider the impact a decision or action will have on the child and ensure the positive impacts outweigh any negative impacts.

Non-Discrimination: Children's Future will enforce a policy of non-discrimination at all times and all children will be treated with respect and love equally.

Participation and Self-Determination: Children's Future abides by the principle that a child has the right to have his or her views taken into account in accordance with their age and development in major decisions affecting their life. They will be given the opportunity to express their ideas and views and be heard on matters affecting them. Children's Future will in all cases give serious consideration to the child's wishes (and those of their legal guardians where appropriate) throughout the decision-making process. All children have the right to self-determination.

In general, in order to ensure the above commitment, Children's Future is committed to upholding:

- The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Cambodian Constitution
- The Cambodian current and future laws and tools on child rights
- Positive traditional practice

A. Policy Implementers and Implementation

This policy applies to all associates of Children's Future: employees, volunteers, interns, prospective employees, counterparts, consultants, contractors, partner organization members and visitors. Henceforth, the term "Children's Future associates" will be used to represent these groups, for which the Policy is relevant and applicable.

Children's Future's Child Protection Officer (CPO) is the Head of child well-being (or other designee, as assigned by the Country Director) responsible for ensuring that the Child Protection Policy is disseminated and understood by all Children's Future associates and that they each acknowledge their receipt of and responsibilities under the policy.

The Head of child well-being will update and maintain the Child Protection Policy, as required, so that it may remain relevant and effective. Relevant Children's Future staff will consistently monitor all risks pertaining to the children and, when needed, make any necessary changes to the Child Protection Policy.

Children's Future management will advise and assist all Children's Future associates in the implementation of the policy. The Children's Future Head of child well-being (Child Protection Officer) and/or Country Director will ultimately be responsible for the effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

B. Personnel, Recruitment, Hiring, and Human Resources Responsibilities

Integral to this Policy's effectiveness is Children's Future's commitment to ensure the most appropriate and well-suited candidates are selected to implement Children's Future's work.

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1. All vacancy announcements will make clear that Children's Future is committed to child protection and that the prospective employees' commitment to child protection is a condition of employment.
2. All prospective Children's Future associates will be informed of Children's Future's Child Protection Policy at the start of the recruiting process.
3. Screening of applicants will include: a written application, personal interviews (which include behaviour based interview questions, for example asking applicants about their attitude, protecting children and interviewees manner around children) a copy of a passport/ID card, police checks and two verbal reference checks (one must be current employer). Applicants will be asked about previous work experience with children.
4. Where possible and permissible according to local law, applicants for all positions are requested to give permission for a criminal record or police check, to identify any convictions or charges related to child abuse or other relevant offences. Expatriates will be subject to the same background checks, as possible and permissible by law in their home countries. (Currently, police checks are not feasible for Khmer staff in Cambodia; however, whenever it is practical, Children's Future will follow it.)
5. Children's Future reserves the right to terminate a contract if reference checks (and background checks) reveal that the person is not suitable to work with children or, for any reason, may put children at risk.
6. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed with each new Children's Future hire or volunteer, again, during his/her orientation. The Head of child well-being (CPO) shall ensure all new personnel acknowledge in writing, that they have read, understood, and agree to the Policy; signed copies of their acknowledgement are kept in the personnel file.

C. *Short-term Visitors to Children's Future Premises*

Occasionally, external visitors may come to the Children's Future Center. In those instances, Children's Future expects all Children's Future associates to follow these guidelines:

- Visitors should make advance arrangements with Country Director prior to their visit.
- All visitors must sign in at the Children's Future gate and receive a Children's Future pass, which must be worn in a visible manner at all times.
- No visitor should be allowed on the property, without the prior knowledge and approval of the Children's Future Country Director or Child Protection Officer.
- All visitors must be closely monitored by Children's Future staff at all times. No visitor may be left alone, with or without children, while on the Children's Future premises.
- Photography is only permitted if Children's Future management give prior approval. Before any photos that are taken during the visit are shared publicly (including through private social media accounts), they must be approved by the Country Director or the Child Protection Officer.
- Upon departure from the property, each visitor must sign out and return their Children's Future passes.
- Visitors may not make any direct contact with Children's Future children or families before or after their visit to Children's Future, including in person or online.

- If visitors have the opportunity to interact with children during their time at Children's Future, they may not ask them personal questions directly pertaining to sensitive topics, such as domestic violence or trafficking.
- Visitors may not initiate any kind of physical touch with children at Children's Future. If a child initiates physical touch, such as a hug, visitors may briefly reciprocate.

D. *Education and Awareness Raising*

Children's Future is obliged to make all Children's Future's associates aware of the issue of child protection and the Child Protection Policy. Children's Future will initiate an open culture, encouraging opportunities for staff to raise concerns, to question, to discuss, to feedback, and learn about child protection issues. This will be done during staff meetings, through training and on other occasions. Regular staff supervision will take place where this issue will be addressed and issues discussed in an open supportive manner.

All Children's Future associates and local communities should be provided with opportunities to learn about how to safeguard children, to recognize and respond to concerns about child abuse. Appropriate literature regarding how to report an incident and child-safe information will be made available to Children's Future children. Regular training and awareness raising regarding child protection will take place with children using Children's Future services. Child Protection will be discussed regularly at meetings and forums that take place with Children's Future children.

When and where possible, children will be educated in self-protection from physical and sexual abuse. Children will be taught that they have a right to do something if an adult or another young person behaves or talks to them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable or in danger, and to trust and act on their instincts.

IV. CHILD PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT

Although Children's Future employees are asked to read and sign a more general Employee Handbook, the organization feels that due to its work with children, a more specific and detailed *Child Protection Code of Conduct* will provide all Children's Future associates with the most comprehensive overview of what behavior is and is not permitted by Children's Future associates while interacting with children. This code is primarily designed to protect children, but will also protect personnel from false accusations of inappropriate behavior or abuse of said children.

1. No child is to be taken on a bicycle, motorbike, tuk-tuk or car by Children's Future associates without prior approval from the Head of child well-being/CPO.
2. No child is to be taken to any Children's Future associate's home, guesthouse, hotel or accommodation, except in extraordinary circumstances with prior approval from the Child Protection Officer or Country Director. Exceptions may be made for Children's Future associates who serve as foster parents.

3. If it is necessary for a staff member to transport a child (e.g. for medical treatment), they must get explicit and prior permission from the Head of child well-being/CPO or senior management and may travel nowhere other than the agreed upon location.
4. No Children's Future associate is permitted to socialize with children outside of the Children's Future premises, excepting a friendly hello. Prior permission must be sought from the Head of child well-being/CPO for any contact with the children outside of the Children's Future center or outside of agreed-upon working hours and days.
5. No Children's Future associate is permitted to take any child to a café, restaurant or buy them food, unless permission has expressly been given by the Children's Future Country Director or CPO. If a child is obviously hungry, then the Head of child well-being/CPO, or a senior staff member are to be informed immediately.
6. No communication is permitted with a child outside of the workplace without the approval of the Head of child well-being/CPO, as well as, without the supervision of an authorized Children's Future staff member or associate. Such communications would include, but are not limited to: telephone calls, letters and emails. If a child initiates communication with a Children's Future associate (such as phone calls, visits, letters, emails or presents – not including drawings), the Head of child well-being/CPO is to be informed immediately. Children are encouraged to reach out to their case workers, Social Work Manager, or CPO by phone or text message in case of an emergency.
7. No presents of any kind are to be bought for or given to the children, without prior approval of the Head of child well-being/CPO.
8. Children's Future associates may not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
9. Children's Future associates must use appropriate language, actions and behavior with children at all times. Extra care should be given to protecting the reputation of both female children and female Children's Future staff by ensuring that language and behavior at all times reflect appropriate male-female relationships, which are respectful of and in line with Cambodian culture and customs.
10. Children's Future associates may not hire any of the Children's Future children to do domestic work or to perform other work outside of Children's Future.
11. Children's Future associates must take extreme care when interacting physically with the children. Children's Future staff must not fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch minors in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way. Under no circumstances should any physical contact be or have the appearance of being sexual in any way. Male staff should be particularly attentive to the risks of physically interacting with female students, and should avoid physical touch with older female students.
12. Children's Future personnel must not exert inappropriate physical force when dealing with the children. This includes, but is not limited to: pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, pinching or any other action that could cause fear, intimidation or distress.
13. Children's Future personnel are responsible for their actions and reactions to children at all times. They should be aware that they might work with children who may, because of the circumstances and abuse they have experienced, use a relationship with an adult to obtain special attention. The adult is always considered responsible for his or her actions regardless of how a child behaves towards them. Staff should be alert to such behavior and avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position. Any advances of this nature, whether emotional or sexual, should be reported immediately to the Head of child well-being/CPO.

14. Wherever possible and practical, staff should implement the “two-adult” rule, whereby two or more adults supervise all activities with children. If for any reason a private conversation or counseling session is warranted with a child, another adult must be within visual contact.
15. If it is necessary to have a personal conversation or to conduct a counseling session with one or several girls, it is always preferred that this be done by a female staff. If it is necessary for one or more male staff to do so, there must be at least one female staff member present at all times.
16. If a Children's Future associate comes across any Children's Future child that is visibly distressed, afraid, upset, crying, etc., she/he must report it to the on-call Social Worker or CPO immediately, so that appropriate support can be given to the child. Such circumstances that would require the Children's Future associate take this step includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. A caretaker or close relative (parent, sibling, etc.) being convicted of an offence
 - b. A sibling being sent/taken away (by parent/ caretaker or third party)
 - c. The child engaging in potentially dangerous activities
 - d. The child dressing inappropriately or displaying dangerous or inappropriate behavior
 - e. The child being hurt in any manner
 - f. Abandonment by caretaker
 - g. Death or serious illness of a parent, caretaker or close relative
17. A Children's Future staff member must accompany a visitor or non-staff member the entire time the visitor is on Children's Future premises.
18. No Children's Future associate, except those designated, should enter the sleeping space of the children without prior approval from the Head of child well-being/CPO.
19. Inappropriate conduct towards children, including failure to follow the behavior standards stated above, is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment, termination of the Volunteer Terms of Agreement, and/or police notification and legal action.
20. Any circumstance or situation relating to child safety that is not explicitly addressed in this policy should be immediately referred to the CPO.

Code of Conduct Relating to Media and Communications

21. All communications regarding Children's Future children must ensure that the protection, privacy, dignity and best interests of the child are paramount.
22. Children's Future associates must obtain receipt of informed consent of the child and his/her caretaker before a recording, photograph or image is taken and its intended use(s) explained.
23. No one besides designated Children's Future photographers may take pictures of the children, without explicit prior permission from the Head of child well-being/CPO.
24. Once permission is granted, Children's Future associates must ensure that children are adequately clothed in photographs or images taken of them and not in poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive.
25. Children's Future should never publish photos or videos of any children, whether or not they are Children's Future beneficiaries, that depict them inadequately dressed or in poses that are sexually suggestive.
26. No one other than the designated Children's Future associates has permission to publish photos or videos of the children.

27. Children's Future associates must never use the real names of vulnerable children in stories or in photo captions and it should be indicated that the children's names have been changed.
28. Children's Future associates must never engage children in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services.
29. Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures.
30. Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occurs during association with DFAT

V. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS, CHILDREN'S FUTURE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, EDUCATION ADVOCATE, AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION TEAM

1. Physical Touch: Children's Future teachers, librarians, school administrators, and members of the education team may not initiate physical touch with children, unless physical touch will facilitate a learning activity, such as teaching handwriting. In this case, consent must be requested first ("Can I hold your hand to help you with this writing?") and children may refuse or deny. In the course of reading and playing with children in the library, librarians may touch students more frequently than other staff, but should make every effort to request consent and make sure all touch is appropriate and respectful.

Since the Education Advocate provides counseling to students that is facilitated by closer relationships, she may use physical touch thoughtfully in the same way that Social Workers do, such as an occasional pat on the back or hug from students who consent.

For all members of the Education Team, physical touch can be allowed in emergency situations for children's safety, such as to break up a fight, or to remove a violent student from the classroom. In these cases, it should be reported to the School Manager and CPO immediately afterwards.

2. Conversations between children and Children's Future teachers, librarians, school administrators, and other members of the education team about children's personal issues (excluding issues related to violence and/or lack of safety) should be briefly recorded on forms approved by the CPO. These conversations are not confidential (they may always be shared at the request of the CPO and/or social work staff) and should never be presented to children as such. These staff members may not provide counseling, but can listen to and encourage children. Any conversation that references violence, abuse, or makes a staff member concerned for a child's safety must be immediately reported to the CPO.
3. At the discretion of the CPO, information about children's home lives or backgrounds may be shared with members of the education team, if the CPO believes that such information will enable the education team to better educate and/or care for a particular child. In general, the CPO should seek to share information with the education team that

is likely to be common knowledge among other students, for example, the death of a parent.

4. The Education Coordinator and the CPO are responsible for coordinating training about these particular policies for the Education Team at least once a year.

VI. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND SOCIAL WORK MANAGERS AND ADVISORS, HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATES, AND HEAD OF CHILD WELL-BEING

1. Physical Touch: Social Workers, the Social Work Manager and Advisor, Health Care Associates, and the Head of child well-being may use physical touch thoughtfully to build trust or comfort a student, such as with a pat on the back or a hug. Staff should make every effort to ask for and receive positive consent before physical touch, especially hugs. Male staff should be particularly attentive to the risks of physically interacting with female students, and should avoid physical touch with older female students.
2. Conversations between children and the Health Care Associate about children's personal issues (excluding issues related to violence and/or lack of safety) should be briefly recorded on forms approved by the CPO. These conversations are not confidential (they may always be shared at the request of the CPO and/or social work staff) and should never be presented to children as such. These staff members may not provide counseling, but can listen to and encourage children. Any conversation that references violence, abuse, or makes a staff member concerned for a child's safety must be immediately reported to the CPO.
3. At the discretion of the CPO, information about children's home lives or backgrounds may be shared with Health Care Associates, if the CPO believes that such information will enable the Health Care team to provide or advocate for better care for a particular child.
4. The Head of child well-being and CPO are responsible for coordinating training for the Child Well-Being Team about these particular policies at least once a year.

VII. CHILD ABUSE OR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

A. Identifying and Investigating Abuse or Suspected Abuse

Children's Future takes Child Abuse very seriously. Many children have experienced abuse of some form in their home environment and Children's Future provides a safe and protected place for children to call their own. Child abuse in any form including physical, emotional or sexual abuse is a serious offense threatens the well-being and reputation of the child, the accused Children's Future associate(s), and of Children's Future itself. Any violations of this type will be prosecuted to the full extent of law. Child abusers are not likely to remain in an environment

where workers are trained to identify and report suspicious behavior. For these reasons, all personnel are responsible for reporting suspected child abuse or exploitation of any kind.

Any person who has knowledge of, suspects, or has witnessed a potential child protection issue involving Children's Future personnel should immediately contact the Head of child well-being/CPO. The Children's Future associate should be verbally report the incident or suspicion immediately (within 12 hours) in order to allow for early intervention and a prompt investigation. This verbal report should be followed by a written statement, within the next 12 hours (see Appendix 1 for form to be used). A Children's Future associate's failure to report suspected child abuse or misconduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

On receipt of the report, the Head of child well-being/CPO will begin an internal investigation and, when appropriate, file a complaint with the relevant Police, NGO and/or Authorities. Full cooperation will be afforded them during any external investigation. Whenever appropriate, if the accused is an expatriate, the relevant law enforcement authorities of his/her country will also be informed, with due regard given to the potential for extraterritorial proceedings by the expatriate's country of origin.

The internal investigation will be launched within 24 hours of receipt of the verbal complaint and will be carried out by the Head of child well-being/CPO. In the event that the complaint is connected to the Head of child well-being/CPO, the investigation must involve the Children's Future local Executive Leadership Team with regular coordination and communication with the US Leadership Team. At the discretion of the Country Director, any Children's Future associate could be suspended, on full pay (where applicable) during the investigation. The Children's Future associate will be informed that an allegation has been made against him/her and they will be given the opportunity to respond, during the investigation.

The rights and welfare of the child is of prime importance to Children's Future and therefore any investigation will aim to respect the privacy and safety of the child and to make the investigation as child friendly as possible.

B. Responses to Child Abuse Investigation Findings

At the conclusion of the investigation, the associate, the child and/or his/her family, as appropriate, should be informed of concerns or allegations, the results of the investigation and what corrective action, if any, will be taken.

If abuse is proven by the investigation, every effort will be made to assist the child in coping with any physical or emotional trauma he/she may be experiencing. This may include medical treatment, psychological counseling or any other form of assistance deemed necessary and appropriate.

If the investigation concludes that child abuse has occurred which is not subject to criminal prosecution, staff will be subject to disciplinary action within Children's Future, up to and including dismissal. If the investigation concludes that abuse has occurred which is the subject to criminal prosecution according to national laws, all findings will be reported to the relevant national police authorities and full cooperation afforded them during an external investigation. If

the accused is an expatriate, the relevant law enforcement authorities will also be informed with due regard given to the potential for extraterritorial proceedings by the expatriate's country of origin.

In the event an allegation is proven to be untrue, or even fabricated, appropriate steps will be taken for follow-up with the person who has been accused, the child, and the person who reported the incident. Efforts will be made to provide assistance to an associate accused of abuse with children, including counseling and other appropriate forms of support. Also, Children's Future will disclose such information as requested by police, a prospective employer, etc. Such disclosures will be made in accordance with applicable law and / or customs.

The media may become involved when a concern or allegation is raised within Children's Future. Only the Country Director or Executive Director will liaise with the media.

VIII. Children's Future CHILD PROTECTION POLICY ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT

I have read the complete *Children's Future Child Protection Policy*. I have read, understood, and agree to follow all procedures and rules contained within.

If at any time I fail to follow the guidelines set forth by the *Children's Future Child Protection Policy*, I understand that my employment/association with Children's Future may be terminated by the organization and appropriate action will be taken.

Staff / Volunteer / Associate Name and Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

Head of child well-being/CPO or Organization Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

If responding by email please state acceptance of terms of child protection policy. You will receive a hardcopy to sign upon your arrival in Cambodia.