



Children's Future International Child Protection Policy

Policy Area: Child Protection Policy

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Title of Policy: Children's Future International Child Protection Policy

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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

This policy should be read in conjunction with CFI's PSEA policy and Code of Conduct.

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 International in any way and take stringent measures against any Children's Future International 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 International's primary consideration. All decisions and actions concerning a child will serve the best interests of the child. When weighing alternatives, Children's Future International 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 International 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 International 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 International 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 International 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 International 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 International: employees, volunteers, interns, prospective employees, counterparts, consultants, contractors, partner organization members and visitors. Henceforth, the term "Children's Future International associates" will be used to represent these groups, for which the Policy is relevant and applicable.

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

The Technical Director will update and maintain the Child Protection Policy, as required, so that it may remain relevant and effective. Relevant Children's Future International 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 International management will advise and assist all Children's Future International associates in the implementation of the policy. The Children's Future International Technical Director (Child Protection Officer) and/or Executive 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 International's commitment to ensure the most appropriate and well-suited candidates are selected to implement Children's Future International's work.

1. All vacancy announcements will make clear that Children's Future International 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 International associates will be informed of Children's Future International'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.) All Khmer staff will be required to submit a Behaviour Certificate prior to starting employment.
5. Children's Future International 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 International hire or volunteer, again, during his/her orientation. The Technical Director (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 International Center. In those instances, Children's Future International expects all Children's Future International associates to follow these guidelines:

- Visitors should make advance arrangements with the Executive Director prior to their visit.
- All visitors must sign in at the Children's Future International gate and receive a Children's Future International visitor's 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 International Executive Director or Child Protection Officer.
- All visitors must be closely monitored by Children's Future International staff at all times. No visitor may be left alone, with or without children, while on the Children's Future International premises.

- Photography is only permitted if Children's Future International 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 Executive Director or the Child Protection Officer.
- Upon departure from the property, each visitor must sign out and return their Children's Future International visitor passes.
- Visitors may not make any direct contact with Children's Future International children or families before or after their visit to Children's Future International, including in person or online.
- If visitors have the opportunity to interact with children during their time at Children's Future International, 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 International. If a child initiates physical touch, such as a hug, visitors may briefly reciprocate.

D. *Education and Awareness Raising*

Children's Future International is obliged to make all Children's Future International's associates aware of the issue of child protection and the Child Protection Policy. Children's Future International 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 International 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 International children. Regular training and awareness raising regarding child protection will take place with children using Children's Future International services. Child Protection will be discussed regularly at meetings and forums that take place with Children's Future International 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 International employees are asked to read and sign a more general Code of Conduct, 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 International associates with the most comprehensive overview of what behavior is and is not permitted by Children's Future International associates while interacting with children. This code is primarily Children's Future International Child Protection Policy - Updated June 2021

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 International associates without prior approval from the Technical Director/CPO.
2. No child is to be taken to any Children's Future International associate's home, guesthouse, hotel or accommodation, except in extraordinary circumstances with prior approval from the Child Protection Officer or Executive Director. Exceptions may be made for Children's Future International 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 Technical Director/CPO or senior management and may travel nowhere other than the agreed upon location.
4. No Children's Future International associate is permitted to socialize with children outside of the Children's Future International premises, except a friendly hello. Prior permission must be sought from the Technical Director/CPO for any contact with the children outside of the Children's Future International center or outside of agreed-upon working hours and days.
5. No Children's Future International 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 International Executive Director or CPO. If a child is obviously hungry, then the Technical Director/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 Technical Director/CPO, as well as, without the supervision of an authorized Children's Future International 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 International associate (such as phone calls, visits, letters, emails or presents – not including drawings), the Technical Director/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 Technical Director/CPO.
8. Children's Future International 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 International 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 International 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 International associates may not hire any of the Children's Future International children to do domestic work or to perform other work outside of Children's Future International.
11. Children's Future International associates must take extreme care when interacting physically with the children. Children's Future International 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 International 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 International 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 Technical Director/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 International associate comes across any Children's Future International 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 International 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 International staff member must accompany a visitor or non-staff member the entire time the visitor is on Children's Future International premises.
18. 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.
19. 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

20. All communications regarding Children's Future International children must ensure that the protection, privacy, dignity and best interests of the child are paramount.
21. Children's Future International 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.

22. No one besides designated Children's Future International photographers may take pictures of the children, without explicit prior permission from the Technical Director/CPO.
23. Once permission is granted, Children's Future International 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.
24. Children's Future International should never publish photos or videos of any children, whether or not they are Children's Future International beneficiaries, that depict them inadequately dressed or in poses that are sexually suggestive.
25. No one other than the designated Children's Future International associates has permission to publish photos or videos of the children.
Children's Future International 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.
26. Children's Future International associates must never engage children in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services.
27. Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures.
28. 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 CHILDREN'S FUTURE INTERNATIONAL STAFF WITH DIRECT CLIENT CONTACT

1. Physical Touch: Staff 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 staff 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 other staff at Children's Future International, if the CPO believes that such information will enable staff to provide or advocate for better care for a particular child.
4. The Technical Director or other CPOs are responsible for coordinating training for Children's Future International associates about these particular policies at least once a year.

VI. CHILD ABUSE OR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

A. Identifying and Investigating Abuse or Suspected Abuse

Children's Future International takes Child Abuse very seriously. Many children have experienced abuse of some form in their home environment and Children's Future International 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 International associate(s), and of Children's Future International 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 International personnel should immediately contact the Technical Director/CPO. The Children's Future International associate should 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 PSEA Policy for form to be used). A Children's Future International 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 Technical Director/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 Technical Director/CPO. In the event that the complaint is connected to the Technical Director/CPO, the investigation must involve the Children's Future International Executive Director with regular coordination and communication with the Board of Directors. At the discretion of the Executive Director, any Children's Future International associate could be suspended, on full pay (where applicable) during the investigation. The Children's Future International 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 International 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 International, 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 International 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 International. Only the Executive Director or President of the Board of Directors will liaise with the media.

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

I have read the complete *Children's Future International 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.