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Child Protection Policy



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Tabel of contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Definitions.....	2
3. Policy statement: Prevention of violence against children and child exploitation and abuse	4
3.1 General principles IC commits to a set of principles that derive from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its optional protocols:.....	4
3.2 Awareness.....	5
3.3 Safeguarding	5
4. Implementation and procedures	5
4.1 Recruitment, selection and induction.....	5
4.2 Report of breaches.....	5
4.3 Confidentiality.....	6
4.4 Procedure with partners	6
5. Standards for acceptable/unacceptable behaviour in relation to children.....	6
6. Monitoring / Evaluation.....	8

1. Introduction

It is the duty of Institute Circle (IC) to protect all children participating in or impacted by its activities. The purpose of this Child Protection Policy (Policy) is to provide a framework for ensuring that children (defined as any human being under the age of 18 years, see on definitions) are protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation in all IC operations, activities and programs. IC promotes the right of all children and that they have the right to be safe and protected, to develop their full potential, attend school and take part in mainstream society.

The IC is committed to protecting children from exploitation and abuse regardless of their nationality, culture, ethnicity, gender, religious or political beliefs, socio-economic status, family or criminal background, physical or mental health or any other factor of discrimination.

The IC is also committed to providing a safe environment for any child with whom it comes in contact, through implementing child-safe practices within its culture, programs and activities, policies and procedure.

This Policy applies to all personnel that are engaged by the IC, including its staff, consultants and volunteers. It also defines, what is expected from IC partners, suppliers and contractors with regard to child protection. This Policy is to be communicated to all relevant stakeholders. It is included as an annex to the global Staff Regulations and as such is part of the employment contract of all Employees. For all other personnel it is also an annex to the Code of Conduct and its relevant provisions are binding for all personnel required to sign the Code of Conduct.

Scope of application

Everyone working with children has a basic duty of attention toward them. IC as an organization and all those working with IC must recognise the risks to children and assume responsibility for keeping them safe. In order to protect children from abuse and exploitation, IC, its staff and its partners must at all times conduct themselves with the highest levels of professionalism and integrity and always act in the best interests of the child. This policy aims to protect children from intentional and non-intentional harm or abuse. It applies to IC and to all those collaborating with IC, and notably service providers and partners. For people placed under IC's responsibility (people having signed a permanent or fixed-term employment contract with HI, family members accompanying international staff, consultants, interns, voluntary workers or international volunteers and people invited onto IC's premises or programmes), this policy applies to all situations, professional or otherwise, during and outside working hours. It is IC's responsibility to ensure that everyone is informed of the existence and content of this child protection policy.

2. Definitions

Child: A child is defined as a person below the age of 18.

Child abuse: is a general term covering all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual assault, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the

child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Physical abuse: The actual or likely physical injury to a child or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

Emotional abuse: The notion of emotional abuse includes verbal abuse, discrimination and psychological maltreatment. It refers to the actual or likely adverse effects on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional illtreatment or rejection.

Sexual abuse: refers to actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Neglect: refers to any act of omission or failure to provide, whether deliberate or otherwise, that compromises the health, security and development of a child, with due consideration to context, resources and circumstances. It refers to the on-going incapacity to satisfy the basic physical and/or psychological needs of the child resulting in a high risk of serious physical and cognitive disorders.

Child pornography material: material that depicts a person, or is a representation of a person, who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age and is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity, or is in the presence of a person who is engaged in a sexual pose or activity, and does that in a way that a reasonable person would regard as being, in all the circumstances, offensive.

Child labour: labour is regulated by such instruments as the International Labour Organization's Minimum Age Convention (N° 138) which sets the following age limits:

- The minimum age for admission to employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years.
- The minimum age for admission to any type of employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or moral of young persons, shall not be less than 18 years. This age-limit may be reduced to 16 years, on condition that the health, safety and morals of the young person concerned are fully protected and that young persons have received adequate specific instruction or vocational training. In IC's Child Protection policy, child labour refers to the employment and work of children below the age of 15. IC is extremely vigilant with regard to this age limit in order, amongst other things, to preserve children's access to schooling and vocational training. Furthermore, and with due regard to national legislation, IC is careful to employ people over the age of 18 and encourages all those working in collaboration with IC to do likewise.

Participation by children in light work: This refers to children's participation in economic activity that does not negatively affect their health and development or interfere with their education. No economic activity is allowed for children under 12 (International Labour Organization, Convention 138).

Child protection: an activity or initiative for the purpose of preventing or responding to a specific incident of child abuse

3. Policy statement: Prevention of violence against children and child exploitation and abuse

3.1 General principles IC commits to a set of principles that derive from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its optional protocols:

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation;
- Everyone has a responsibility to protect and support children and to always act in the best interests of the child;
- Organisations have a duty to protect the children they encounter when implementing their activities. They must take all necessary steps to provide the children with the care and support they need and contribute towards a protective environment.
- Children are actors in their own protection and development, which does not exempt parents and educators from their responsibilities. IC is committed to the protection and promotion of children's rights and reaffirms its policy of zero tolerance of any form of child abuse.

The prevention of child exploitation and abuse by the IC will be achieved through the following:

- a) Internal communication of this Policy to all personnel;
- b) Training of personnel: All personnel should be given the opportunity to discuss the implications of this Policy for them with their manager, as part of their induction / orientation or as part of further personal development;
 - The IC provides training on child protection for its personnel, in order to ensure that the latter are fully aware of their responsibilities to protect children and how to report concerns or allegations about child exploitation and abuse;
 - This training, which can be done through the Learning Platform or other means as appropriate, will be mandatory for all personnel who will be in contact with children in the course of their duties;
 - Depending upon the functions of the personnel concerned, this training may be focused on awareness raising or may be more in depth;
- c) Concerning the recruitment of all personnel whose functions will require them to work with, or have access to, children:
 - All endeavours will be made to conduct a criminal background check;
 - When obtaining this background check is not feasible, due to the context or the short duration of the contract:
 - The personnel concerned should sign a statutory declaration stating that they have never been convicted of, are not currently suspected of, or are not being prosecuted for any offence involving any type of harm to a child or children, and declare that there is no element which could affect their suitability to work with children;
 - Careful consideration must take place about the appropriateness of the person working with the IFRC;
 - Qualifications and reference checks of former employers should be sought and interview plans for recruitment should incorporate behavioural-based interview questions.

3.2 Awareness

IC undertakes to raise the awareness of all those with whom it is in collaboration and to ensure their understanding of the principles and provisions of this policy, as well as of the whistleblowing and monitoring procedures in place. Awareness-raising will notably include:

- Information for the above-mentioned persons on: – The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its optional protocols which constitute the frame of reference of our child protection policy. These texts can be consulted on HI's intranet. – HI's guidelines on the use of social networks by its employees which notably specify that prior consent must be obtained from children, their families and the communities for the use of any images and that this use must respect the dignity of the children concerned. See the Social network policy: Guidelines for the use of social media by HI employees and volunteers – Strict prohibition of owning or consulting pornographic material.
- Specific awareness-raising of the following: – Children with disabilities have the same rights as other children and must be treated with dignity, respect, sensitivity and equity. – Gender-related vulnerabilities with regard to child protection. – Community-based programmes contribute to HI's commitments by helping to ensure that children with disabilities have access to education, are not victims of forced labour and are given a voice.

3.3 Safeguarding

During the implementation of IC's activities, evaluations of the risks covered by this policy will be conducted as required. A risk mitigation strategy including safeguarding measures has been developed and integrated into the implementation of activities involving or having an impact on children so that the risk for children is minimised and the commitment to "Do No Harm" is respected. IC undertakes to include these safeguarding measures in its communication with its partners. IC ensures that its partners incorporate the notion of « Do No Harm » in their interventions.

4. Implementation and procedures

4.1 Recruitment, selection and induction

Before starting work with IC, each candidate shall undertake a secured recruitment process and submit to background checks. Anyone having signed a permanent or fixed-term employment contract with IC, accompanying family members, consultants, as well as interns, international volunteers and voluntary workers engaged by IC shall be informed of this child protection policy. IC's Code of Conduct also contains a clause concerning respect for children's right to be protected from abuse. The employment contract contains a clause stipulating that the employee undertakes to comply with this child protection policy.

4.2 Report of breaches

All personnel who have reasons to believe that a child may be exploited or abused, or that the safety or well-being of a child may be at risk, as a result of an action or abstention of an IC personnel, have the obligation to report it as soon as possible to the relevant authority in the IC. Police authorities

should be contacted as well, if circumstances and the possible seriousness of the acts require this. All reports and concerns raised by both personnel and individuals in the community will be properly considered, documented, and treated seriously, with care, discretion and in a timely manner. The IC will take all necessary steps against any form of retaliation suffered by personnel or other persons reporting possible breaches of this Policy. Reports of child abuse and exploitation or violence against children committed by individuals who are not IC personnel and that are not committed in the context of IC activities should be reported to the police authorities: personnel doing so should be aware of the potential consequences of doing so, including for the safety of children, and should discuss with their manager as appropriate.

4.3 Confidentiality

In all matters relating to this policy, the obligation of confidentiality must be respected. Therefore no information provided by children and/or other individuals about any form of child abuse shall be made public without the prior consent of the child /his or her parents / his or her legal guardian and/or the person reporting this abuse. The children (and their families) must be kept fully informed at all times of the process underway for handling the incident and of its outcome. Concerns, allegations or disclosures shall be reported in writing. Reports shall be as precise as possible, giving an exact account of what happened, how it happened etc. and including the sequence of events and all subsequent actions taken. All reports shall be kept under lock and key and access to them shall be restricted to Director. Any transfer of information (either verbal or electronic) shall be done in such a way as to guarantee confidentiality. Should the allegation concern staff from another organisation, the Director shall decide how to approach the issue with the organisation concerned before reporting it to a third party, and with due regard to local legislation.

4.4 Procedure with partners

IC shall not enter into a partnership agreement with organisations whose staff or members are liable to commit acts of abuse against children. Any proven allegations of such practices shall result in the termination of the partnership agreement unless the partner commits to and effectively ensures a radical change in behaviour.

5. Standards for acceptable/unacceptable behaviour in relation to children

In addition to the rules mentioned in the Code of Conduct personnel must abide by the following standards concerning IC programs or activities involving children:

- All activities involving children are supervised by personnel, in particular same-sex personnel if this enhances the protection of children. The number and gender-balance of personnel will be determined according to the sex, age and capacity of the children, and should always be sufficient with the necessary skills and qualifications consistent with the scope of work / role expected. Wherever possible, more than one adult should be present when working in the proximity of children;

- No activity or programme is undertaken with children without the express written permission of their parents / guardians, or relevant authorities for street/unaccompanied children;
- Where the IC arranges for visits, no child should be left unsupervised with a visitor to a programme or event;
- In general, personnel are not allowed to work alone with a child somewhere that is secluded or where they cannot be observed. It is acceptable for personnel to work alone with a child where there are visibility panels / windows in doors. Efforts will be made to ensure that the lone personnel is the same sex as the child if this is considered to enhance the protection of the child in a given situation;
- Personnel should not invite unaccompanied children into the personnel's home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger and, in this case, the personnel involved should advise their supervisor of the need for such action;
- Personnel should not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case the personnel must obtain his/her supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present, if possible the child's parent or guardian. In all cases, the personnel should be the same sex as the child/children;
- Personnel must use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- Personnel must not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- Personnel must not use physical punishment on any part of the body of the child;
- Personnel must comply with all relevant labour laws in relation to child labour;
- Personnel must not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury;
- Personnel must immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and Policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures and laws of the country;
- Personnel must immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during their association with the IFRC that relate to child exploitation and abuse;
- When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, the personnel must: obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child. As part of this, the personnel must explain how the photograph or film will be used; assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child; ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive; ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts; ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

6. Monitoring / Evaluation

Policy and practices are monitored permanently. The Director is responsible for information on policy and practice, as well as for monitoring all matters relating to abuse within the IC network.

Emina Hadžić

Director

Ljubljana, 1.4.2015