**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

This Child Protection Policy is GADC’s statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear to all in the organization and who come into contact with us what is required in relation to the protection of children and that child abuse in any form is unacceptable to GADC.

**Purpose**

GADC expects that its employees and others who work with GADC have all children’s best interests at the heart. This Child Protection Policy is GADC’s statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear to all in the organization and who come into contact with us what is required in relation to the protection of children and that child abuse in any form is unacceptable to GADC.

**Statement**

GADC is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children’s rights to protection are fully realized. We take seriously our responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any forms. In addition, we will take positive action to prevent child abusers from becoming involved with GADC in any way and take stringent measures against any GADC staff and/ or associate who abuse a child. Our decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of “the best interests of the child.

**Scope**

The Child Protection Policy (CPP) applies to everyone working for or associated with GADC. It encompasses the whole of GADC and includes without limitation:

**Staff at all levels:** Core Groups, Communities, Partners, Volunteers, Donors, Consultants and others. Also the staff or representatives of partner organizations and local governments who have been brought into contact with children or are party to GADC child sensitive data while working for or with GADC.

**Visitors to GADC:** ( e.g- donors, researchers, ) who may come into contact with children through GADC are also bound by this policy.

**Definition**

1) **A Child** is defined as any person under the age of 18 years1.

2) **Child Abuse** is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill- treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation or a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

**3) Child Protection**, within the scope of this policy, is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that GADC undertakes to safeguard children from harm by any individual involved in GADC work including employees, contractors, volunteers, Core Groups, Communities, Partners, Local organization and International organization.

**4) Physical abuse of a child** is when a person purposefully injures or attempts to injure a child from an interaction or lack of interaction which is reasonably within the control of a person in a position of responsibility, power or trust over the child. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, grabbing or choosing not to assist a child when a situation is causing them physical pain. There may be a single incident or repeated incidents.

**5) Emotional abuse of a child** is any action that is not physical but that has a negative effect on the social, intellectual or emotional development of a child. Emotional abuse is categorized loosely as the chronic behavioral pattern directed at a child whereby a child’s self-esteem and social competence is undermined or eroded over time. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, belittling, ridiculing, intimidating, isolating, ignoring or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment towards the child.

**6) Sexual abuse of a child** is when a person who is in a position of responsibility, trust or power over a child involves the child in sexual activity which is intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person and which the child does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent. This can include contact acts (such as rape or sexualized touching) or non-contact acts (such as exposure to pornography or taking sexualized photographs of the child).

**7) Domestic violence** is a pattern of assaultive and/or coercive behaviors conducted within the family environment or domestic (home) environment which can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and/or economic coercion.

**8) Child Exploitation** is when a child is used in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, the commercial sexual exploitation of children whereby a child is sexually abused in return for cash or for kind and child labor whereby a child is forced to work or perform other acts to an extent detrimental to the child’s physical, social or mental development.

*1The UNCRC also defined a child as a person under the age of 18 years of age*

**Guiding Principle**

This Policy is based upon the following guiding principles:

* GADC is recognized zero tolerance of child abuse;
* Recognition of children’s best interests;
* Sharing responsibility for child protection;
* Use of a risk management approach to prevent child abuse; and

**Code of Conduct**

**Acceptable Behaviors**

GADC personnel shall:

* Treat children with dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, disability, or other status;
* Conduct themselves in a manner appropriate with their position representing of GADC in all their dealings with children;
* Immediately raise concerns regarding a child’s safety or wellbeing in accordance with GADC’s Internal Reporting Procedures and observe procedural fairness when engaged in decision-making;
* Be visible when working with children and, wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
* Listen to children and allow them to be engaged in decisions that may affect them;
* Comply with all relevant legislation of the host country, including labor laws in relation to child labor.

**Unacceptable Behaviors**

GADC personnel shall not:

* Use language or demonstrate behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, demeaning, sexually provocative, or culturally insensitive;
* Engage children in any form of activity that is demeaning, offensive, sexually provocative, abusive or culturally inappropriate or insensitive;
* Engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts;
* Invite unaccompanied children into their home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
* Access child pornography through any medium;
* Sleep in close proximity to unsupervised children;
* Hire children for domestic or other labor 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;
* Exclude or favor a particular child;
* Use equipment including but not limited to computers, mobile telephones, video or digital cameras to capture images inappropriately and without the consent of the child and his/her parent or guardian;
* Physically assault, discipline or punish children; and/or
* Touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive manner.

**Reporting and Incident Response**

**Reporting Child Abuse**

Any suspicion or disclosure of child abuse must be immediately reported to the relevant Manager. All incidents will be reported and managed in accordance with the Child Protection Incident Reporting Process.

**For non-critical incident allegations**

A non-critical allegation of child abuse is one which does not pose immediate risk to a child supposing the allegation was true. These incidents may well be critical in nature but the time frame for responding is not as immediate; an example is accessing child pornography.

1) The incident will be documented and investigated in accordance with the GADC Incident Reporting and Response Procedure;

2) the accused person will be given an opportunity to express their views/opinions/

version of facts;

3) the views of the alleged child victim will be considered in light of the documented evidence that children rarely lie about abuse; and

4) where the incident is reasonably proven to have occurred, appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken, including, but not limited to:

- Warning; and/or

- Suspension; and/or

- Dismissal.

The disciplinary measure will depend on the nature and severity of the offence and will be at the discretion of the Executive Director and will be fully documented.

**For critical allegations**

A critical allegation is an allegation whereby there may be an immediate risk to the welfare of a child should the allegation be found true – an example is inappropriate sexual activity.

1) Where the allegation involves a violation of either the laws of the country in which the incident occurs, or the laws of Cambodia, the incident will immediately be reported to appropriate authorities and the person will be suspended from employment pending an investigation;

2) All efforts will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and rights of the accused person and information related to the incident will only be shared on a “need to know basis”;

3) If the incident involves a breach of the Code of Conduct (but is not a violation of national laws), the accused person may be suspended pending an investigation;

4) where a breach of the Code of Conduct is found to have occurred, all circumstances will be considered and the appropriate action will be taken;

5) where an allegation is found to be false or unfounded, all efforts will be taken to ensure the rights of the accused person is upheld;

6) where allegations amount to a violation of laws of Cambodia, privacy will no longer be applicable unless deemed necessary to uphold the rights of the victim.

7) Where appropriate in investigations, GADC will consider and take into account legal advice as well as advice from any responsible authorities.

**Recruitment and Reference Checking**

GADC will not knowingly permit any person to be employed or engaged as a volunteer if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.

All new GADC personnel are required to provide an appropriate current police check (criminal record check). They must include police checks for overseas countries if they have worked or lived overseas for any period longer than one year in the last ten years.

Reference checks with former employers / referees will be conducted.

Referees cannot include partners, spouse and/or other relatives.

The interview process for GADC personnel should include behavior based interview questions that relate directly to working with children, where appropriate.

THE END

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