

# Child Protection Policy

## PURPOSE OF A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### :: INTRODUCTION

Child abuse happens in all societies throughout the world. The child abusers can be anyone, including those who work/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, Green Gecko Project (GGP) is obliged and committed to ensuring that children involved with its programmes are protected from any form of abuse.

### :: DEFINITION

*A child* means every human being below the age of eighteen years.

*Child abuse* means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm deliberately or recklessly 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 to show that the organisation is taking its duty of care seriously.

### :: STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

As a street children support organisation, Green Gecko Project's (GGP) first priority is the safety and well being of the children under its care. GGP is committed to a strict child protection policy to ensure the children are not exposed to abuse, exploitation, violence or neglect. This 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 GGP's primary consideration. All decisions and actions concerning a child will serve the best interests of the child. When weighing up alternatives GGP will seek to ensure that the final decision or action arrived at will be that in which the child receives the maximum benefit possible. GGP 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:** GGP 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:** GGP abides by the principle that a child has the right to have his or her views taken into account in accordance with their age 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. GGP 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.

GGP aims to provide safe and friendly environments where children can develop and grow in a healthy way.

The guidelines in this Child Protection Policy protect both the child from abuse and adult from false accusation.

GGP will:

- Respect the rights and dignity of the children, families and communities with whom we work, and always act according to the best interest of children.
- Demonstrate commitment to actively preventing child abuse.
- Take positive action to prevent child abusers becoming involved with GGP in any way and takes stringent measures against any GGP associate who commits child abuse.

To ensure the above commitment, GGP 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

## **1. WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy applies to all associates of GGP: interns, volunteers, employees, prospective employees, counterparts, consultants, contractors, partner organisation members and visitors. The term GGP associates will be used.

The GGP Child Protection Officer (CPO) is responsible to ensure that the Child Protection Policy is dispatched and understood by all GGP associates and that they all acknowledge their receipt of and responsibilities under the policy.

GGP will ensure the Child Protection Policy remains relevant and effective. GGP will consistently monitor all risks pertaining to the Children and when needed make any necessary changes to the Child Protection Policy.

GGP will advise and assist all GGP associates in the implementation of the policy. The GGP Child Protection Officer and/or Director will be responsible for the effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

## 2. VISITORS TO THE CENTRE

- To minimise impact on the children's schedules and privacy Green Gecko has visitor hours between 9:30am - 10:30am Monday to Friday.
- All visitors must sign in at GGP office and receive a GGP pass.
- No visitor should be allowed in without informing GGP director, manager or senior staff member, unless prior authority has been granted.
- All visitors must be closely monitored by GGP staff or volunteers, No visitor can be left alone, with or without children when in GGP centres. Photography is only permitted if GGP management give approval.
- All visitors must be signed out and return GGP passes.

## 3. PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND ORIENTATION

1. Advertisements for job vacancies will make clear that GGP is committed to child protection and that prospective employees' commitment to child protection must be a condition of employment.
2. All prospective GGP associates will be informed of GGP's Child Protection Policy at the start of any recruiting process.
3. Screening of applicants will include a written application, personal interviews (where possible), copy of passport/ID card, any Child Safe children's cards eg: Australian 'Blue Card', reference/police checks and reference checks. During the interview process, applicants will be asked about previous work with children.
4. Where possible and permissible by local law, applicants for positions as a staff member or volunteer are requested to give permission for a criminal record or police check for any conviction 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. (*Police check is now not practical in Cambodia, but whenever it is practical GGP will follow it.*)
5. GGP reserves the right to terminate a contract if reference checks (and background check in the future) reveal that the person is not suitable to work with children or for any reason that may put children at risk.
6. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed during new staff orientation. The CPO shall ensure all new personnel acknowledge in writing their receipt and understanding of the policy, with signed copies of their acknowledgement kept in the personnel files.

#### 4. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GGP PERSONNEL

A code of conduct gives guidelines deemed to be appropriate and proper behaviour for GGP associates when interacting with Children in the care of GGP. They are primarily designed to protect children but are also intended to protect personnel from false accusations of inappropriate behaviour or abuse.

1. No child is to be taken on a bicycle motorbike, tuk-tuk or car without making prior arrangements with the directors or CPO.
2. No child is to be taken to any GGP associates home, guesthouse, hotel or accommodation.
3. No GGP associate is permitted to socialise with the children outside the GGP premises apart from a friendly hello.
4. No GGP associate is permitted to take any child to a café, restaurant or buy them food, unless permission has expressly been given by GGP Directors. If the children are obviously hungry, then the Directors or CPO are to be informed immediately.
5. No presents of any kind are to be bought for the children without prior arrangement with Directors or CPO.
6. GGP associates should not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
7. GGP associates must display appropriate language, actions and relationships with children at all times. Extra care should be given to protecting the reputation of both female children and GGP staff by ensuring that language and behaviour at all times reflect appropriate male-female relationships, which are respectful of and in line with Cambodian culture and customs.
8. Permission must be sought from the Directors of GGP for any contact with the Children outside of the GGP centre.
9. GGP personnel should not hire any of the GGP children to do domestic work or to perform other work without prior permission from the GGP directors. This is necessary to ensure the child's age and working conditions meet the criteria specified in the MOSALVY Prakas on Light Work for Minors and other relevant labour laws. These include hiring only minors over the age of 12 years old, limiting workdays and hours and providing access to education. Staff not meeting these criteria may be in violation of child labour laws and are subject to investigation for child abuse and/or exploitation.
10. GGP must take extreme care when interacting physically with the Children. GGP staff must not fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch minors in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way. Under no circumstance should any physical contact be or have the appearance of being sexual in any way.
11. GGP personnel must not exert inappropriate physical force when dealing with the Children. This includes, but is not limited to, pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping or any other action that could cause fear, intimidation or distress.
12. GGP 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 abuses 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 behaviour and avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position. Any advances of this nature should be immediately reported to the directors or CPO.

13. Where possible and practical staff should implement the 'two-adult' rule, whereby two or more adults supervise all activities with Children. If for any reason an individual conversation or counselling session is warranted with a child, another adult must be within visual contact.
14. Inappropriate conduct toward children, including failure to follow the behaviour standards stated above is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment or placement and/or police notification and legal action.
15. A GGP staff member must accompany any visitor or non-staff member to any GGP facility.
16. No GGP associate, except those designated, should enter the sleeping space of the children without permission from the CPO/Director.
17. No email access is permitted with a child without the permission of the GGP Directors/CPO and the supervision of an authorised GGP staff member or associate.
18. GGP staff should maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times. Some examples of inappropriate professional boundaries include, but are not limited to, sharing personal or work-related problems with children, keeping secrets of any kind with children or exchanging money or goods with children at any time (including lending, borrowing, selling or buying).

## 5. AWARENESS RAISING AND EDUCATION

1. GGP is obliged to make all GGP's associates aware of the issue of child protection and Child Protection Policy.
2. All GGP associates and local communities should be provided with opportunities to learn about how to safeguard children, to recognise and respond to concerns about child abuse.
3. 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.
4. The Directors of GGP 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 and supportive manner.
5. Appropriate literature such as help-line posters, leaflets re how to report an incident and child-safe information will be made available to the GGP children. Regular training and awareness raising regarding child protection will take place with the children. Child Protection will be discussed regularly at meetings and forums that take place with GGP children.

## 6. COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT CHILDREN

1. All communications regarding the GGP children will ensure that the protection, privacy, dignity and best interests of the child are paramount.
2. The informed consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians should always be obtained before a recording, photograph or image is taken and its intended use(s) explained. Where possible, the child and family should be shown the finished product before it is published.
3. Children should be adequately clothed in photographs or images taken of them and not in poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive.
4. Real names of vulnerable children should be changed and it should be indicated that they have been changed.

## 7. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING ABUSE OR SUSPECTED ABUSE

The GGP takes Child Abuse very seriously. Many of the Children have experienced abuse of some form in their home environment and GGP provides a safe and protected place for the children to call their own. Child abuse in any form including physical, emotional or sexual abuse is a serious offence that would threaten the well being and reputation of the child, the accused GP associates and of GGP itself. Any infringements 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 behaviour. 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 GGP personnel should immediately contact the CPO or one of the Directors. A report should be made immediately, within 24 hours, to allow for early intervention and a prompt investigation. This verbal report should be followed with a written statement within a further 48 hours. Failure to report suspected child abuse or misconduct may result in disciplinary action.

On receipt of the report, the CPO and/or Director of GGP will begin an internal investigation and where appropriate file a complaint with the relevant Police, NGO and/or Authorities. Full cooperation will be afforded them during any external investigation. Where appropriate, 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.

The internal investigation will be launched within 48 hours of receipt of the complaint and will be carried out by the CPO and/or Director. In the event that the complaint is connected to the CPO and/or Director, the investigation must involve the GGP Management Committee.

At the discretion of the Director, any GGP associate could be suspended, on full pay (where applicable) pending investigation. The associate will be informed that an allegation has been made against him/her and they will be given the opportunity to respond.

The rights and welfare of the child is of prime importance to GGP 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.

## 8. RESPONSE TO INTERNAL INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

1. At the conclusion of the investigation, the associate, the child and/or his or her family as appropriate should be informed of concerns or allegation, the results of the investigation and what corrective action, if any, will be taken.
2. 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 counselling or other appropriate forms of support
3. 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 or she may be experiencing. This may include medical treatment, psychological counselling or any other form of assistance deemed necessary and appropriate.
4. If the investigation concludes that child abuse has occurred which is not subject to criminal prosecution, staff will be subject to disciplinary action within GGP, up to and including dismissal.
5. If the investigation concludes that abuse has occurred which is 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.
6. In the event an associate is discharged for proven child abuse, GGP 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.
7. The media may become involved when a concern or allegation is raised within GGP. Only the Directors will liaise with the media.

# Green Gecko Project

## Child Protection Policy declaration



I have read the complete GGP Internal Child Protection Policy. I fully understand and agree to follow all procedures contained within.

If at any time I fail to follow the guidelines set forth by the GGP Child Protection Policy I understand that my employment / association may be terminated by the Director and appropriate action will be taken.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name and signature

\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Date

*If responding by email please state acceptance of terms of child protection policy. You will receive a hardcopy to sign once you arrive.*