

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

The need to protect children is a universal obligation that is embraced by **I AM HOPE GUATEMALA** in its work. Children who experience exploitation and abuse are less likely to fully participate in their own development, education, and well-being, and more likely to suffer mental health issues, to reduce educational outcomes and to abuse drugs and alcohol.

I AM HOPE GUATEMALA and partners who come into contact with children during delivery of programs are in a position of trust and authority and should avoid actions or conduct which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour. I AM HOPE GUATEMALA supports programs that work directly with children, we are committed to child protection as set forth in the following policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all part-time, full-time, and temporary I AM HOPE GUATEMALA employees, VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS, as well as sub-recipients, consultants, and sub-contractors, and partners working with I AM HOPE GUATEMALA.

Definitions

Child - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as "a human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, the majority is attained earlier". Even though law for some countries defines the age of majority as substantially lower than 18, I AM HOPE GUATEMALA adopted the definition of a child as below the age of 18 for the purposes of applying this policy.

Child Abuse - I AM HOPE GUATEMALA defines child abuse as all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including commercial exploitation, sexual abuse while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person responsible for the care of the child.

Principles and Values

Zero tolerance of child exploitation and abuse – I AM HOPE GUATEMALA will not tolerate child exploitation and abuse.

Through enactment of this policy, we endeavour to reduce the risk of child exploitation and abuse associated with delivering program activities. We will not knowingly engage — directly or indirectly — anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children and will, to the extent of the law and policy, discipline those who exploit or abuse children in the course of delivery of our programs.

Recognition of the best interests of children - Some children, such as children living in poverty or areas impacted by disasters, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. I AM HOPE GUATEMALA will ensure anyone who works with children is aware of these vulnerabilities and makes every effort to keep the best interests of children at the forefront of their work.

Sharing responsibility for child protection – I AM HOPE GUATEMALA will work with donors, partners, sub-recipients, and subcontractors to effectively manage risks to children.

Risk management approach – I AM HOPE GUATEMALA will assess the risks to children in its programs and, through the implementation of and compliance with, this policy work to manage those risks.

Procedural fairness – I AM HOPE GUATEMALA'S will process reports and suspicions of exploitation and abuse as set forth in its whistle-blower and other ethics policies.

Goal

To protect children from all forms of exploitation and abuse in the course of I AM HOPE GUATEMALA'S work

I AM HOPE GUATEMALA'S Child Protection Code of Conduct

Employees and Volunteers of I AM HOPE GUATEMALA, as well as sub-recipients, consultants, subcontractors, and partners working with the I AM HOPE GUATEMALA, will comply with the following code of conduct as related to child protection:

- Treat children with respect regardless of race; color; sex; language; religion; political or another opinion national, ethnic or social origin; property; disability; birth or other status;
- Not use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- Not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts;
- Wherever possible, will ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
- Not invite unaccompanied children into one's home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- In an official capacity, not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case the staff must obtain their supervisor's permission and ensure that another adult is present if possible;

- Use any computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately and never exploit or harass children or access child exploitation materials through any medium;
- Not use physical punishment with children or discipline them in any other manner;
- Not hire children for domestic or other labor and comply with all relevant national and local laws in relation to child labor;

When photographing or filming children for work related purposes take precaution to protect them. Before photographing or filming a child:

- Assess and endeavor to comply with local traditions and restrictions for reproducing personal images;
- Explain how the photograph or film will be used. Must obtain consent from the child's caretaker;
- Ensure that photos and films present children in a dignified and respectful manner, and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not portrayed in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- Ensure that images are an honest representation of the context and the facts;
- Protect the child's identity: The child should remain anonymous, and staff must ensure that file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically;
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse or exploitation;

Immediately disclose to I AM HOPE GUATEMALA STAFF all charges, convictions, and other outcomes of a child exploitation or abuse offence which occurred before or occurs during the association with I AM HOPE GUATEMALA'S.

In addition, candidates for positions involving contact with children also will be subject to criminal background checks (where obtainable) and a behavioural interview with specific questions related to working with children.

Understanding Forms of Child Abuse

Forms of Child Abuse - Child abuse can occur in a variety of forms, be it physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or bullying.

Physical Abuse - "Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures" (Child Wise, 2008).

Emotional Abuse - "Emotional abuse is a persistent attack on a child or young person's self-esteem. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating, or isolating the child or young person" (Child Wise, 2008). Children may also be subject to emotional trauma or abuse if they are forced to or inadvertently become a witness to domestic violence. When this occurs deliberately it is a form of abuse.

Neglect - "Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and supervision to the extent that the child's health and development are at risk" (Child Wise, 2008).

Sexual Abuse - "Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing children to, or taking, pornographic photographs" or other media/materials (Child Wise, 2008). Child sexual abuse damages children physically, emotionally and behaviorally. Both its initial effects and long-term consequences have an impact on the individual, their family, and the community.

Initial effects of child sexual abuse may include:

- Medical conditions such as sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and physical injury
- Emotional problems such as guilt, anger, hostility, anxiety, fear, shame, lowered self esteem
- Behavioral problems such as aggression, delinquency, nightmares, phobias, eating and sleeping disorders
- Problems at school and at home.

Long-term consequences may include:

- Sexual dysfunction (such as flashbacks, difficulty in arousal; avoidance of or phobic reactions to sexual intimacy)
- Promiscuity
- Prostitution
- Discomfort in intimate relationships
- Isolation
- Marital problems
- Low self esteem
- Depression
- Mental health problems

- Bullying - Bullying is the use of force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate, or aggressively impose domination over a child. The behavior is often repeated and habitual.

Recognizing the Signs

Who is Most Likely to Abuse a Child?

- Someone who is known to the child.
- Someone whom the child trusts.
- Someone whom the family trusts, i.e. not a stranger.
- Someone who has access to the child.
- Someone who has him/herself experienced abuse as a child.

How to Recognize Abuse

Listed below are a number of indicators of abuse; however, they may vary by cultural and economic context. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive but is a guideline to help establish whether some form of child abuse or exploitation has taken place.

Emotional Signs of Abuse:

- Sudden under achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Changes or regression in mood or behavior, particularly when a child withdraws or becomes clinging
- Depression or extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Indicators of Possible Physical Abuse:

- Any injury inconsistent with the explanation given to them
- Injuries to the body in places not normally exposed to falls or rough games.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures, etc., which do not have a reasonable explanation
- Infections and/or symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases
- General bruises, scratches or other injuries not consistent with accidental injury.

Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse:

- Any allegations made by a child concerning abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behavior, or engaging in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Sudden changes in mood or behavior
- Open displays of sexuality
- Lack of trust in familiar adults; fear of strangers
- General bruises, scratches or other injuries not consistent with accidental injury
- Acting-out behavior – aggression, lying, stealing, unexplained running away, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide attempts.

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