



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Definitions

- A **child** means every human being below the age of eighteen years.
- **Child abuse** can be exploitation, neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse, both intentional and unintentional.
- **The Child Protection Policy** (CPP) is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to protect children from harm, and clearly defines what is required to protect the children attending REACH Siem Reap (REACH) or participating in any functions related to REACH. The policy will be followed by administrators, employees, contractors, volunteers, visitors, students, and any other person who comes in contact with the children of REACH.

Introduction

Children around the world are at risk from exploitation, sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect and other forms of inappropriate interactions perpetrated by adults and other children. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled and disadvantaged children, and others who may be particularly vulnerable, must be addressed. Children are especially at risk in developing countries such as Cambodia as the country adapts to rapid changes, sees increasing movements of people, has a lack of robustness in its legal process, and a booming inbound tourism industry.

**REACH will not tolerate
any form of child abuse.**

The guidelines in this CPP protect both the child from abuse, and adults & children from false accusation. REACH will appoint a Child Protection Officer (CPO) who is responsible for ensuring that the CPP is distributed and understood by all associates of REACH, and who will be responsible for the effective implementation of the policy.

Statement of Commitment

REACH is a Child Safe and Child Friendly organisation. Whilst providing a quality education to the students attending REACH and endeavouring to meet the needs of the local community, the first priority will be protecting the safety of the students. REACH is committed to ensure that the children are not exposed to abuse, exploitation, violence or neglect.



Aims of the Child Protection Policy

The CPP aims to ensure that all staff and volunteers are equipped to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues. They have a responsibility to uphold the CPP and report any concerns to the CPO or a Program Director and ensure the concerns are reported to the appropriate authorities.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, at school, and on the street. Those who exploit children include parents and other family members, community members, teachers, tourists, and volunteers.

Unfortunately, some individuals actively seek employment or voluntary work with children in order to harm them. A volunteer, worker, or teacher with REACH will have regular contact with children and such people are an important link in identifying cases where children need protection.

Child exploitation and abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to explore and understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with sound judgment about the appropriate action to take. A framework of clear rules and guidance makes it much easier to take the appropriate action.

All suspicious cases involving child protection issues, or of poor practice, should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Child's best interest and universal inclusivity

All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, **have the right to protection from abuse and exploitation.**

All decisions and actions concerning a child will take the best interest of the child as the most important consideration and will include the wider cultural practices in Cambodia as part of the decision-making process.

People covered by the Child Protection Policy

The following CPP applies to all associates of REACH including teachers, administrators, any other employee, volunteers, and students. It will also apply to any visitors to the premises including, but not limited to, tourists, contractors, consultants, friends, parents or visiting officials.



Recruitment of REACH staff and volunteers

REACH recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way, and that all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. All REACH employees and volunteers are required to undergo a briefing meeting with the relevant REACH official prior to commencing work, which will include the following:

- A personal interview where the job requirements and responsibilities will be clarified.
- Evidence of Identity (passport for international volunteers) must be shown to the nominated REACH official, who will take a photocopy/scan of the passport and entry visa (for international volunteers) prior to commencing the volunteer or employee placement
- All staff and volunteers must declare any past child protection breaches and any criminal record
- All staff and volunteers must answer any appropriate questions asked by officials of REACH. Information gathered will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Appropriate references/referees must be given if/when requested by REACH
- The full CPP must be read by all persons employed by or offering their services as sub-contractors and/or voluntary services, to us. Each will receive a copy of the relevant documents and shall acknowledge their receipt of, and their responsibilities under, the CPP. The signing and observation of the policy within our REACH 'Code of Conduct' for is an integral part of any contract of employment or written or verbal agreement between REACH and our staff and volunteers. A signed copy of their acknowledgement will be kept in their personal files.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, appropriately and formally recorded.
- REACH reserves the right to terminate a contract or agreement if reference checks, (and background checks in the future), reveal that the person is not suitable to work with children or for any reason that may put children at risk.

REACH obligations to staff, volunteers and visitors

- All employees will be trained in child protection issues such as awareness, identification, and where to seek additional help.
- All volunteers will be informed of relevant child protection issues prior to their placement with us.

To acknowledge this CPP, staff and volunteers must read and sign the REACH 'Code of Conduct', and must also review and understand the REACH 'Donation Policy'. Furthermore, all Visitors must read and sign the Visitor Policy. Everyone shall be made aware of the existence and location of the full CPP should they wish to refer to it.

The different forms of child exploitation/abuse



Exploitation of children and young people can take place in many forms. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse may be contact or non-contact. These include forcing or coercing a child into: any sexual act including physical contact of penetrative or non-penetrative (such as oral sex) nature; partaking or watching of pornographic material/sexual acts; encouraging children to behave in a sexually inappropriate way.
- **Physical Abuse:** Includes any act that physically harms a child including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. It can also include the threat of violence against a child.
- **Emotional Abuse:** An attack on a person's self-esteem that includes any negative emotional ill treatment of a child, causing them to feel inadequate, unloved, unworthy, frightened or in danger. This can include verbal abuse, witnessing domestic violence, bullying, imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations on the child, or restricting their participation in age appropriate activities/normal social interaction.
- **Neglect:** Is the persistent failure/denial to meet a child's physical and psychological needs. This can take the form of failing to provide food and water, shelter, supervision and medical care and/or failing to protect a child from physical, sexual or emotional harm or danger.

In Cambodia, poverty is persistent and all consuming, rendering many families unable to provide many of these necessities to their children. This inability is not deliberate and of course is different in nature to deliberate neglect. REACH, along with many NGOs, are working towards improving the living standards for all the children we support. Staff and volunteers with REACH must ensure all their actions are directed towards this aim; and must ensure that they themselves do not perpetrate any neglectful acts while children are in their care. If a staff member or volunteer is particularly concerned for certain children, they must speak with the REACH coordinator or director.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur, it should be reported immediately to the CPO or any REACH representative who will record the incident. The parents of the child should also be informed if appropriate:

- If a staff member/volunteer accidentally hurts a child.
- If a child seems unusually distressed in any manner.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something the staff member/volunteer has



done with the result that the situation could be construed to be in contravention of this CPP .

- If there is a suspicion that any form of child exploitation is occurring, regardless of the suspected perpetrator.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working/volunteering with REACH to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. The responsibility extends only to acting on any reasonable concerns and communicating these to the relevant authority.

Whistle-blower Protection

REACH assures all staff and volunteers that it will fully support anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that abuse or exploitation is or may be taking place.

Accused person protection

REACH assures all staff and volunteers that details of any accusation will be kept strictly confidential and relayed only on a need to know basis to the relevant authorities. Further, whilst respecting the need to protect children, full regard for the rights of the individual and the possibility of error in the reporting of concerns will be assured.

Procedures

If a disclosure is made to you, the following procedure should be followed:

- Remain calm and try to assume a non-judgmental attitude.
- Do not question children directly/further beyond that which they have (or third party has) told you.
- Do not make any promises but do tell the child or third party what your responsibility is and what you will do.
- Even if encouraged by the child or third party to 'not tell anyone' you have a duty to report concerns to the relevant authority. You must explain to the informer what your responsibility is and what you have to do, as stated in this policy.
- Make detailed notes about any allegation/suspicion and;
- Report your concerns as soon as possible to the relevant representative who will then contact the appropriate authorities.



Confidentiality

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned regardless of the outcome of the situation. Information will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

Agreement & Understanding of the CPP

You must declare that you have read and understood the child protection policy of REACH and agree to abide by and uphold the policy throughout the duration of your placement.

On your first day at REACH you will be required to sign a form to acknowledge having read and understood this very important document.

Thank you.

REACH Siem Reap – Registered Cambodian NGO #8021
Thlok Andoung Village, Sla Kram Commune, Siem Reap Province, Kingdom of Cambodia

www.reachsiemreap.org