

APLE Cambodia

Child protection Policy



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PP003# / Child Protection Policy

Introduction

APLE is committed to the safety and protection of children from all forms of abuse and exploitation, regardless of their gender, race, religion or country of origin. This Child Protection Policy outlines a risk management approach to prevent any form of child abuse and provides clear and practical guidelines to responding to child abuse situations and managing complaints involving APLE Representatives.

APLE has a fundamental and unique duty of care towards protecting children engaged within its programs and activities and children who are identified to be victims of, or at risk of, child sexual abuse or exploitation.

This policy is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, operates in conjunction with common and statutory law and does not exclude or replace the rights and obligations of any individual under Cambodian law. This Policy has been developed to adhere to international standards and in line with ECPAT International Child Protection Policy guidelines.

Application

This policy applies to APLE's Board of Directors, employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers and interns ("APLE staff").

All APLE programs and partner organizations are also required to have appropriate and effective policies and mechanisms in place to protect children.

Responsibility

The Executive Director is responsible for providing training to APLE staff to assist them in recognising and reporting any risks to child protection and understanding clearly APLE's policy towards it.

The Executive Team and Programme Managers are responsible for putting in place procedures to prevent any risks to Child Protection during the implementation of programme activities, and for ensuring that all partner organisations have appropriate Child Protection mechanisms and policies in place.

The Chair of the Board is responsible for ensuring the safety of members of APLE staff reporting instances or suspicions of any failures of Child Protection mechanisms and ensuring that APLE staff making such reports in good faith are not prejudiced or suffer personal, professional or economic detriment. *[See Complaints, Grievances and Speak Up/Whistleblowing Policies]*

1. Definitions

1.1 A Child is a human being below the age of eighteen years.

1.2 A Child client is any victim, witness, or vulnerable child who receives services from APLE.

1.3 Child Protection is any action taken in order to prevent or stop all behaviours considered dangerous, harmful or illegal for the physical and psychological health of children.

1.4 Child Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect of a child 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. This includes:

- Physical abuse: attempts or causes bodily harm to a child (e.g. slapping, punching, shaking, grabbing, choosing not to assist a child in a situation that is causing them physical pain, etc.).
- Sexual abuse: a person in a position of responsibility, trust, or power uses children to meet their own sexual urges. This may or may not include physical contact (e.g. exposure to pornography, sexually suggestive remarks, inappropriate touching, rape, etc.).
- Emotional abuse: any action that has a negative effect on the social, intellectual, or emotional development of the child. It erodes the child's self-esteem or social competence through non-physical attacks (e.g. name-calling, belittling, ridiculing, intimidating, isolating, ignoring, etc.).
- Neglect: failure to provide the child with the basic needs to an extent that is likely to result in serious impact on the child's health or development (e.g. failing to provide adequate food, shelter, protection, medical care, etc.).

2. Recruitment and Selection Procedures

2.1 The promotion of a child safe commitment must be prominent in all job advertisements in order to ensure a safe work environment where children are protected and enabled to survive and thrive.

2.2 Comprehensive and child safe recruitment and screening processes must be followed for all vacant positions including satisfactory criminal checks as a condition of employment to prevent or minimise the risk of employing a person who poses a risk to children.

2.3 All job announcements and job descriptions must emphasise the necessity of pre-employment background checks, which may also be requested periodically during employment in accordance with the job position. Requirement for a periodical background check of any position must be agreed with the Executive Director.

2.4 Applicants for posts with APLE are required to present a criminal record and background check in either Khmer or English. Applicants must be informed at the time of interview that hiring is conditional on the results of the background check.

2.5 At least two written references are required and two other referees must be contacted for verbal attestation, with the identification of the referee being verified, and one must be the applicant's most recent manager. APLE reserves the right not to hire an applicant if background checks reveal that the person is not suitable to work with children or for any reason that may put children at risk.

2.6 A designated staff member from the Administration Department is responsible for conducting reference checks of candidates. The result of these checks must be kept confidential.

2.7 Successful applicants and APLE Representatives must read this Child Protection Policy and sign a declaration (see annex 1) to acknowledge their understanding of the standard of behaviour they are expected to adhere to in their role with APLE prior to commencing employment or at the time the employment contract being signed.

2.8 If any changes are made to the Policy in the review process, staff must be informed within one month and are required to sign the declaration to acknowledge the change.

2.9 All employment contracts must outline that APLE management has the right to impose disciplinary action, dismissal, or transfer to other duties for any representative who breaches this policy.

3. The Child Protection Code of Behaviour

3.1 APLE Representatives are expected to adhere to the following acceptable behaviours (including, but not limited to):

- Treat all children with dignity and respect;
- Conduct myself in a manner appropriate to my position and consistent to the values of APLE;
- Listen to children and encourage them to be engaged in decisions that may affect them;
- Immediately raise concerns regarding child safety or wellbeing in accordance with this Policy; and
- Wherever possible, be visible when working with children or ensure another adult is present.

3.2 APLE Representatives must not display or participate in any unacceptable behaviours, including, but not limited to:

- Condoning or participating in behaviours involving children that are illegal, unsafe, or abusive;
- Engaging children in any form of activity that is demeaning, offensive, sexually provocative, abusive, culturally inappropriate, or insensitive;
- Using language or demonstrate behaviour towards children that is discriminatory, harassing, abusive, demeaning, sexually provocative, culturally inappropriate, or insensitive;
- Excluding or favouring a particular child;
- Doing things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes. Exceptional circumstances may mean an Investigator or Social Worker will assist a child in this manner;
- Inviting unaccompanied children into their home, unless they are in immediate danger;
- Seeking to make contact or spend time alone with a child client outside of work-related requirements;
- Taking a child away from their family, guardian, working/living place, or aftercare facility without consent;
- Using personal or APLE equipment inappropriately or in a way that causes additional trauma to a child; and
- Ignoring or avoiding taking proper action when seeing or knowing a child is in a situation that is immediately or apparently abusive or dangerous.

4. Use of Images of Children in APLE work, communications or publications

4.1 As a part of investigations, APLE Representatives may be required to take photographs of children without the individual or their guardian's consent. These photographs are only to be used as a part of the evidence gathering process for police investigations and must not be communicated or publicised in any other way.

4.2 In all other instances when photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, APLE Representatives must observe the following:

- No photograph or image of an identifiable child may be used in any APLE publication to illustrate any aspect of the sexual abuse or exploitation of children. Nor may an image of an identifiable child be used in any APLE publication if it might reasonably lead the viewer to believe that the child is a victim of sexual abuse or exploitation. This prohibition stands regardless of consent given by either the child, any adult legally responsible for their care, or any agency which may own the photograph.
- In this context, an identifiable child is a child whose identity is likely to be revealed by showing all or part of their face or their body, or particular surroundings. A publication may include any materials stored or transmitted in hard-copy, film, electronic or digital formats. Informed consent means the individual understands the circumstances in which the image will be used.
- For all other purposes, obtain informed consent from the child and a parent/guardian of the child to take a picture and use it only in the specific context for which consent was obtained.
- Any APLE staff using images in any APLE publication must:
 - Ensure children are portrayed in a dignified and respectful manner, including adequate clothing and appropriate poses that are not submissive or sexually suggestive;
 - Ensure images are honest representations of the context and facts;
 - Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child and his/her location when sending images electronically; and
 - Ensure images of children available to the public do not reveal any identifying information about the child and his/her location.