



Vision Save for Vulnerable
Children and Women (VSVCW)

VISION SAVE FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND WOMEN'S CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY.

Approved by VSVCW governing board May 16, 2019

This policy applies to all staff employed by or working for Vision Save for Vulnerable Children and Women (VSVCW), VSVCW volunteers, and visitors to projects. VSVCW will communicate this policy to all partners and encourage them to implement the same in their organizations or institutions.

1. Introduction

Vision Save for Vulnerable Children and Women (VSVCW) has developed this Child Safeguarding Policy to prevent and minimize the risk of harm to children who are involved in VSVCW supported activities. It complements, but does not replace, the VSVCW Staff Code of Conduct and Policy to Prevent Sexual Exploitation, as well as the International Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.

The VSVCW Staff Code of Conduct will be updated with key contents from this Child Safeguarding Policy. All staff will sign the updated version, thus reaffirming their willingness and responsibility to uphold the standards therein, including those related to the safeguarding of children. Upon approving the Child Safeguarding Policy, adherence to its content will have prominence in VSVCW's Staff Code of Conduct.

It is essential that VSVCW staff receive clear instructions and guidelines on the expectations to their conduct, including space to reflect positively on how to stimulate an open, respectful and non-abusive work culture.

In addition, it is essential that VSVCW management is equipped with adequate authority, responsibility, monitoring tools and recourse for action in the event of any misconduct. The goal is to maintain and further strengthen an exploitation-free environment.

2. Objective and Scope of this Policy

The objective of this policy is to promote and to ensure respect for the rights to safety, well-being and development of all children affected by VSVCW's activities. It aims to prevent and minimize the risk of any kind of abuse of children.

The policy applies to all VSVCW staff, VSVCW volunteers and visitors to projects.

VSVCW holds the position that all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation violate children's dignity and rights as human beings. All children have a right to be safe at all times, and are bearers of equal rights to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

VSVCW's policy is informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional Protocols (on involvement of children in armed conflict and on sale of children, child prostitution, and VSVCW child safe guarding Policy.

child pornography).

VSVCW Offices shall implement this Child Safeguarding Policy with due respect to national policies and regulations, as far as these are in accordance with the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols. Any inconsistencies identified in this regard should be discussed with the Director and board of the organization.

VSVCW upholds the following principles in keeping with the above-mentioned international human rights standards for keeping children safe:

- All children have equal rights to protection, survival, well-being and development regardless of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, sexual or gender identity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status
- The best interests of the child is paramount to child protection activities
- Children's views are to be heard, valued and respected
- Special attention is to be given to the girl child due to dominant patriarchal and gender discriminatory norms in many societies
- Any form of child abuse or exploitation is unacceptable.
- Everyone has a responsibility to support the protection of children
- Organizations have a duty of care to children with whom they work, are in contact with, or who are affected by their work and operations
- Where organisations work with partners, they have a responsibility to support partners in meeting minimum protection requirements

3. Putting Principles into Practice

3.1 Prevention of child abuse

As stipulated in the UNCRC, all children have the right to protection from all forms of violence, injury or abuse, neglect, and maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse and exploitation. While States are the primary duty-bearers in this regard, VSVCW is dedicated to respecting children's rights, to ensuring that their welfare and physical security are recognized, safeguarded, and protected in accordance with international human rights standards. Child protection is a central and fundamental aspect of VSVCW's overall accountability towards affected populations and rights holders. The UNCRC and Its Optional Protocols remain central in this regard.

3.2 Ensuring Child-Safe Recruitment of Staff

VSVCW is committed to robust recruitment practices. The following steps will be taken in the recruitment process:

- Vacancy announcements should mandatorily announce that VSVCW has zero tolerance on child abuse and sexual exploitation, as per international human rights standards and VSVCW's Staff Code of Conduct.
- When appropriate to the position, candidates will undergo a reference check for their past behaviour as per this Child Safeguarding Policy and our Staff Code of Conduct. At least two references must answer positively to this.
- Selected candidates for positions that require close contact with children need to undergo a criminal background check. Candidates will be asked for their consent to such a check and will be informed on why this is required. Where a criminal background check is not feasible, other

measures will be taken to screen the individual's suitability to work with children. The screening will be documented in personnel files.

- Successful applicants will be provided with a full copy of this Child Safeguarding Policy, and asked to sign the VSVCW Staff Code of Conduct. This will be kept on their personnel file.

3.3 Staff Code of Conduct for Safeguarding Children

As part of VSVCW's commitment to respect human rights, all VSVCW staff, VSVCW volunteers and visitors to projects should act in the following manner within and outside working hours:

- Treat all children equally and with respect, without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, sexual or gender identity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status
- Rigorously restrain from engaging in acts, behaviour or using language that is or can be seen as inappropriate, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or discriminatory to children, and at all times respect private boundaries in accordance to the situation
- Under no circumstances develop sexual relationships with children, whether or not it is with the child's consent, or engage in abusive physical or virtual relationships with children.
- Do not inflict physical, emotional, financial or psychological punishment on children.
- In no way encourage or condone behaviour on the part of others, which could be interpreted as abuse or exploitation of children
- Actively seek to prevent the trafficking of children and the forcible recruitment of children into armed groups, and report possible non-compliance in this regard
- Promote the participation of children, including the girl child, in decisions that affect them and listen to them
- Actively reduce risk of any allegation by ensuring that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children
- Maintain confidentiality in child protection cases and disclose information only with the relevant parties, as authorized by VSVCW.
- Report all concerns regarding policy non-compliance and suspicion of non-compliance to the VSVCW complaints mechanism
- Abide by relevant local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour, in so far as such legislation accords with international human rights standards, including the UNCRC, and is in the best interest of the child
- Comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images. Never pose children in ways that could be seen as sexually suggestive, vulnerable or submissive
- To the extent possible, obtain verbal permission from the parent/guardian, if taking a picture of a child/children. To the extent possible, explain how the picture will be used.

4. Prevention and Awareness Raising

Vision Save for Vulnerable Children and Women (VSVCW) will raise awareness and ensure that the safeguarding of children's rights is an integral part of its work. This includes knowledge on human rights protection of the child. This will be a mandatory agenda point on partner platform meetings from 2019 forward, in this way VSVCW will raise awareness of child safeguarding with implementing partners. It will be a requirement that they have and adhere to a child safeguarding policy. This will be documented through the VSVCW contracts with partners.

5. Complaints and Response Mechanism

When engaging in activities with children, VSVCW staff are obliged to find appropriate, accessible and safe means for children to report abuse. Special attention must be paid to the fact that children often do not report experiences of abuse themselves. It is the responsibility of all staff to be alert to stories or signs of child abuse within VSVCW activities.

Local managers are responsible for ensuring that staff are attentive to activities that could threaten the intention to safeguard children. Trusted staff, appointed by the manager or director, must handle any knowledge or suspicion of violation of this policy. In the absence of a specially appointed staff member, this task falls to the local staff representative.

VSVCW will use its existing complaints mechanism as the main entry point for staff, right holders, and other stakeholders to report any concerns they may have concerned child abuse. This ensures proper, ethically correct and considerate handling with respect to the child. Any and all decisions on legal or disciplinary actions will be made by VSVCW board in the presence of a leader advisor, following a thorough investigation with respect for due process safeguards.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring of risks, risk mitigation and the effectiveness of the child safeguarding measures will be incorporated into VSVCW's monitoring processes. Monitoring visits must include questions on procedures in place to ensure compliance with this policy, both for own staff and relevant partners.

7. Execution and Division of Responsibilities in VSVCW Management

The VSVCW senior management at Head Office, Director and Programme Managers will have the overall responsibility for implementing the Child Safeguarding Policy in VSVCW by proactively ensuring staff awareness of all elements of the policy and abiding by its procedures.

The Human Resources Unit, Director and Programme Managers

They have the responsibility to thoroughly explain and ensure that the VSVCW staff member, prior to signing a contract with VSVCW, understands the VSVCW policy, the consequences of any breach of the policy (i.e. disciplinary action, contract termination, or other legal remedies), and the procedures to follow if a breach of policy has been reported.

The Human Resources Unit

This Unit will act as a resource unit, offering support and guidance to all Programme Managers and employees, as necessary. They will share good practice and lessons learned within VSVCW. The Human Resources Unit will also be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the policy to further child safeguarding.

All Staff

Each person must take responsibility for his/her own conduct, having read and affirmatively confirmed adherence to the VSVCW policy to safeguard children. Any allegation or concern regarding a breach of this policy should be reported in writing to the complaint mechanism/contact person for further action.

Everyone

It is incumbent upon all members of VSVCW staff, Board, and Council to uphold the principles of this policy and to make all possible efforts to share their knowledge and contribute to the protection of children.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Head of Human Resources after assessing the progress and effectiveness of the policy. The policy may need to be reviewed more frequently if there is a major concern regarding its implementation and compliance.

Key Definitions

Child

A child or young person is any person under the age of 18 years, regardless of national laws, which may recognize adulthood earlier.

Child Protection

Child protection is the set of policies, procedures and practices that the organization employs to protect children from all forms of mistreatment including, but not limited to, all forms of violence, child labour, commercial and sexual exploitation.

Staff

Staff refers to all personnel affiliated with the organization whether full time, part time, interns or volunteers, as well as those employed on short-term contracts in any location.

Child safeguarding

Child safeguarding is the set of internal policies, procedures and practices, which we employ to ensure that our organization is a child safe organization.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse refers to a parent or caregiver's inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child, or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. It may include a repeated rejection or belittling of a child, or the making of threats, which has the intent to scare and frighten. It can also result from excessive demands that place expectations on a child beyond their capacity, or by witnessing forms of violence, including domestic violence.

Child Neglect

Child neglect means the failure by a parent or caregiver, or by organizations and service providers, to provide a child with the culturally accepted and essential conditions for their physical and emotional development and well-being. In a development or emergency context, the risk of this form of abuse can occur when someone uses his/her position to withhold assistance in order to gain favours or advantage. Neglect can also happen in emergency or development contexts, when lack of time or conflicting priorities can lead to not considering children when planning project activities.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse includes actions that cause harm and injury to a child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. Other examples may include actions that can cause physical damage such as withholding medication, food or water, or confinement of a child. This form of abuse may be intentional, an indirect consequence of physical punishment or aggression, or may arise from neglect where the child is exposed to physically dangerous and life-threatening situations.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs if a child is pressured or forced to take part in any kind of sexual activity, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. It is the use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or significantly older child or adolescent. This includes activities, which deliberately expose a child to sexual imagery or pornography. Sexual abuse may involve siblings or other family members, or persons outside the family.

Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation refers to one or more of the following:

- Committing or coercing another person to commit acts of abuse against a child possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting materials that exploit a child.
- Committing or coercing another person to commit an act of grooming (behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity), including online grooming.
- Facilitating, encouraging, or knowingly benefiting from child labour - that is, work those children should not be doing because they are too young to work, or because it is dangerous or otherwise unsuitable for them.