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Self help Community Centre

Purpose of child protection policy

Introduction

Child abuse happens in all societies throughout the world. The child abuser can be anyone, including those who work/care for children.

The UN convention on the Right of Child states that: All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation. Everybody has responsibility to support the care and protection of children. The duty bearers are accountable to eradicate child abuse. Bases on the above is obligated and committed to ensuring that children involved with the programs are protected from any of abuse.

Definition

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

Child abuse means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm deliberately causes 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 organization is taking its duty of care seriously.

Statement of commitment

As a community support organization, Self Help Community Center's (SHCC) first priority is the safety and well being of the children under its care.

SHCC 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 Right of the Child as follows:

Best interest of the child: The best interest of the child will be SHCC's primary consideration. All decisions and actions concerning a child will serve the best interest of the child. When weighing up alternatives SHCC will seek to ensure that final decision or action arrived at will be that in which the child receives the maximum benefit possible. SHCC will be at all the times consider impact a decision of action will have on the child and ensure the positive impacts outweigh any negative impacts.

Non-Discrimination: SHCC will enforce policy of non-discrimination at all times and all the children will be treated with respect and love equally.

Participation and Self-Determination: SHCC 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 the matters affecting them. SHCC will in all cases give serious considering 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.

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

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

SHCC will:

- Respect the rights 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 SHCC in any way stringent measures against any SHCC associate who commits child abuse.

To ensure the above commitment, SHCC is committed to upholding

- The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Cambodian constitution, especially article 41 and 42 (please see appendix 1)
- The Cambodian current and future laws and tool on child right.
- Positive traditional practice

1 WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

This policy applies to all associates of SHCC: Intern, volunteers, employees, prospective employees, counterparts, consultant, constructor partner organization members and visitors. The term SHCC will be used.

The SHCC child protection officer (CPO) is responsible to ensure that the Child Protection Policies dispatched and understood by all the SHCC associates and that they all acknowledge their receipt of and responsibilities under the policy.

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

SHCC will advise and assist all SHCC associates in the implementation of the policy.

The SHCC Child Protection Officer and/or director will be responsible for the effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

2 VISITORS TO THE CENTRE

- All visitors and volunteers must sign in at the SHCC and receive a SHCC pass.
- No visitors or volunteers should be allowed in without informing SHCC director manager or senior staff member, unless prior authority has been granted.
- All visitors must be closely monitored by SHCC staff or volunteers, no visitor can be left alone, with or without children when in SHCC centre. Photography is only permitted if SHCC management gives approval.
- All visitors must be signing out return SHCC passes.

3 PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND ORIENTATION

1. Advertisement for job vacancies will make clear that SHCC is committed to child protection and that prospective employee's commitment to child protection must be a condition of any employment.
2. All prospective SHCC associates will be informed of SHCC'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, Child safe card, children's cards e.g.: Australian 'blue card', reference checks. During 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 children 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 SHCC will follow it.)
5. SHCC reserves the right terminate a contract if reference checks (and background check in the future) reveal that person is not suitable to work either 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 insure all new personal acknowledge in written their receipt and understanding of the policy with signed copies of their acknowledgement kept in the personal files.

4. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SHCC PERSONAL

A code of conduct gives guideline deemed to be appropriate and proper behavior for SHCC associates when interacting with children in the care of SHCC. They are primarily designed to protect children but are also intended to protect personal from false accusations of inappropriate behavior of abuse.

1. No child is to be taken on a motorbike, tuk tuk or car without making prior arrangements with the director or CPO.
2. No child is being taken to any SHCC associates home, guesthouse, hotel or accommodation.
3. No SHCC associates permitted to socialize with children outside the SHCC premises apart from a friendly hello.
4. No SHCC associate is permitted to take any child to café, restaurant or buy them food, unless permission as expressly been given by SHCC 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 director or CPO.
6. SHCC associates should not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
7. SHCC associates must be display appropriate language, actions and relationships with children at all the times. Extra care should be given to protecting the reputation of both female children and SHCC staff by ensuring that language and behavior at all the 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 director of SHCC for any contact with the children outside the SHCC.
9. SHCC personnel should not hire any of the SHCC children to do domestic work or perform other work without prior permission from the SHCC director. 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 labor 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 labor laws are subject to investigation for child abuse and/or exploitation.
10. SHCC must take extreme care when interacting physically with children. SHCC staff must not fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch minors in an appropriate or cultural insensitive

way. Under no circumstance should any physical contact be or have the appearance of being sexual in any way.

11. SHCC personnel must not exert inappropriate physical force when dealing with the children. This includes, but is not limited, pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping or any other action that could cause fear, intimidation or distress.

12. SHCC personnel are responsible for their actions and reaction to children at all times. They should be aware that they might work with children who may, because of circumstance and abuse they have experienced, use a relationship with an adult to obtain 'special attention'. The adult is always considered responsible for his or her reaction regardless of how a child behaves to them. Staff should be alert to such behavior and avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position. Any advance of this nature should be immediately reported to director or CPO.

13. Where possible practical staff should be implement the 'two adults' rule, where by two or more adults supervise all activities with children. If for any reason an individual conversation or counseling session is warranted with a child, another must be within visual contact.

14. Inappropriate conduct toward children, including failure to follow the behavior standards stage above is ground for discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment or placement and/or police notification and legal action.

15. A SHCC staff member must accompany and visitor or non-staff member to any SHCC facility.

5 AWARENESS RAISING AND EDUCATION

1. SHCC obliged to make sure all SHCC's associates aware of the issue of child protection and Child Protection Policy.

2. All SHCC associates and local communities should be provided with opportunities to learn about how to safeguard children, to recognize 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 director of SHCC 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 meeting, 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 available to the SHCC children. Regular training and awareness rising regarding child protection will take place with the children. Child Protection will be discussed regularly at meetings and forums that take place with children.

6 COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT CHILDREN

1. All communications regarding the SHCC children will ensure that the protection, privacy, dignity and best interest of the child is paramount.
2. The formed 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 photograph or images taken of them and not in poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive.
4. Real names of children should be changed and it should be indicated that they have been changed.

7 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING ABUSE OR SUSPECTED ABUSE

The SHCC take Child Abuse very seriously. Child abuse in any form including physical, emotional or sexual abuse is a serious offence that would be threatens then well being and reputation of the child, accused SHCC associated and of SHCC itself. Any infringement 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 behavior. For these reasons, all personnel are responsible for reporting suspected child abuse or exploitation of any kind.

Any reason who had knowledge of, suspects, or had witnessed a potential child protection issue involving SHCC 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 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 disciplinary action.

On receipt of the report, the CPO and/or director of SHCC will begin an internal investigation and where appropriate file a complaint with the relevant Police, NGO and/or Authorities. Full cooperation, if accused is an expatriate, the relevant law enforcement authorities will also be inform with due regard given to the potential for extraterritorial proceedings by expatriate's country 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 SHCC Management Committee.

At the discretion of the director, any SHCC 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 SHCC and therefore any investigation as child friendly as possible.

Response to internal Investigation Finding

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 provided to be untrue, or event fabricated, appropriate steps will be taken for follow-up with 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 counseling or other appropriate form 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 counseling or any other form of assistance deemed necessary and appropriate.
4. If the investigation concludes that the child abuse occurred which is not subject to criminal prosecution, staff will be subject to disciplinary action within SHCC, up to and including dismissal.
5. If the investigation concludes that child abuse had occurred which is subject to criminal prosecution 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, SHCC 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 allegation is raised within SHCC. Only the director will liaise with media.

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

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

Signature

Date

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

Appendix I

Royal Government of Cambodia Constitution (unofficial translation)

Article 41: Causing wound on purpose:

- Anyone who beats/fights another person on purpose resulting in permanent disability must be punished by putting them in prison for 1 – 5 years.
- If they temporary disability less than 6 months they must be punished and put in prison for 6 months to 2 years.
- If it doesn't cause disability they are to be punished by putting them in prison for 2 months to 1 year.
- If using any kind of weapons must be punished 2 timed more.

Article 42: Rape

- Anyone who rapes another, even the same sex or opposite sex by touching or actions involving sex must be punished in prison for 1 year to 3 years.
- If the rape conducted be coercing a victim younger than 16 years old then the person who commits this must be punished 2 timed more.